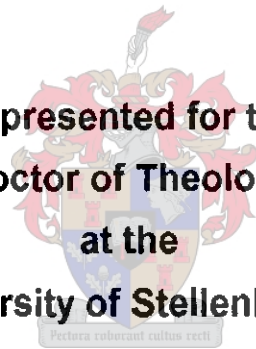


# **Traditioning and Reinterpretation**

## **The quest for a methodology of faith-formation**

by  
**Nicolaas Willem Simpson**

**Dissertation presented for the Degree of  
Doctor of Theology  
at the  
University of Stellenbosch**



**PROMOTER: PROF HJ HENDRIKS**

**March 1999**

To

**Aletta**

**...Beautiful daughter**

**Elsa**

**...Beloved wife**

**Piet Burger**

**Thys Wentzel**

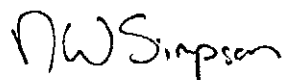
**...Extraordinary friends**

**James and Marianna Simpson**

**...Loving parents**

**Declaration:**

**I, the undersigned, declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously submitted it in its entirety or in part, to any university for a degree.**



**N.W. SIMPSON**

**01-02-1999**

**MARCH 1999**

## Summary

Promoter: Prof. H.J. Hendriks

Department: Practical Theology

Degree: Doctor in Theology

This study argues that faith formation takes place when the tension between traditioning and reinterpretation is maintained.

In Chapter 1 the state of affairs pertaining to faith formation is explored. A number of aspects of the crisis in faith formation in the church and society is stated: The need for forming values, the changing South African situation, the influence of Modernism and Post-Modernism, and the significant shift in the influence and membership of mainline churches.

Starting from the various historical positions in the epistemological debate, Chapter 2 seeks an answer to the question: How do we come to reliable knowledge? Groome ascribes an important function to rationalism and experiential knowledge in the formation of faith. Three important guidelines for faith formation are distinguished in this chapter:

- a) The importance of active remembrance of tradition.
- b) The importance of engaging people as agent-subjects-in-relationship.
- c) The importance of mystery, art and poetry.

The second question that is of historical importance in the debate on faith formation is: What is the formative influence of our social context? In Chapter 3 we review the historical debate on the context of faith formation. Here three more guidelines for faith formation are formulated:

- a) The importance of formation in a relating community
- b) The importance of transformation for social reconstruction
- c) The importance of immersion through mystery, art and poetry

In Chapter 4 the outcome of the historic debate on faith formation is compared to the thoughts of Martin Luther and John Calvin on the teaching ministry of the church. The outcome of this comparison confirms that faith is formed in the tension field between traditioning and reinterpretation.

In Chapter 5 the insights of the previous chapters lead to a constructive proposal that stresses the importance of the interdependence of the formative processes and calls for the facilitation of five faith formation processes. In this chapter the guidelines formulated in Chapters 2 and 3, the tensions between traditioning and reinterpretation, and teaching

methods, are all integrated. This results in five movements. Linked to each of these movements a recommendation is made with regard to different educational methods. The five movements with their correlating methods are:

<b>Movement</b>	<b>Method</b>
1) from schooling to active remembrance of tradition	Narrative method
2) from alienation to engagement	Phenomenological educational methods
3) from rugged individualism to formation in a relating community	Modelling Relationships Intergenerational religious education
4) from ignorance to transformation for social reconstruction	Conscientisation Case Studies
5) from rational formality to mystery and art	Gestalt educational methods

## **Opsomming**

Promotor: Prof. H.J. Hendriks  
Departement: Praktiese Teologie  
Graad: Doktor in Teologie

Hierdie studie betoog dat geloofsvorming plaasvind wanneer die spanning tussen tradisionalisering en herinterpretasie gehandhaaf word.

In Hoofstuk 1 word die besonderhede wat te doen het met geloofsvorming, ondersoek. 'n Aantal aspekte wat krisisse in geloofsvorming in die kerk en gemeenskap tot gevolg het, word genoem: Die behoefte aan waarde-vorming, die veranderende Suid-Afrikaanse situasie, die invloed van Modernisme en Post-Modernisme, en die betekenisvolle verandering ten opsigte van die invloed en lidmaatskap van die vernaamste kerke.

Vanuit verskillende historiese perspektiewe in die epistemologiese debat, soek Hoofstuk 2 'n antwoord op die vraag: Hoe verkry ons betroubare kennis? Grooie ken aan sowel rasionalisme as ervaringskennis belangrike funksies toe. Drie belangrike riglyne vir geloofsvorming word in hierdie hoofstuk onderskei:

- a) Die belangrikheid van aktiewe herinnering van die tradisie.
- b) Die belangrikheid van die inskakeling van mense as agent-subjekte-in-verhouding.
- c) Die belangrikheid van misterie, kuns en poësie.

Die tweede vraag van historiese belang in die debat oor geloofsvorming is: Wat is die vormende invloed van ons sosiale konteks? In Hoofstuk 3 gee ons 'n oorsig van die historiese debat oor die konteks van geloofsvorming. Hier word 'n verdere drie riglyne vir geloofsvorming omskrywe:

- a) Die belangrikheid van vorming in 'n gemeenskap gebaseer op verhoudings.
- b) Die belangrikheid van transformasie vir sosiale rekonstruksie.
- c) Die belangrikheid wat aan verdieping in misterie, kuns en poësie geheg word.

In Hoofstuk 4 word die resultate van die historiese debat oor geloofsvorming vergelyk met die gedagtes van Martin Luther en Johannes Calvyn oor die kategeese van die kerk. Die resultaat van hierdie vergelyking bevestig dat geloof in die spanningsveld tussen tradisionalisering en herinterpretasie gevorm word.

In Hoofstuk 5 lei die insig van die vorige hoofstukke tot 'n konstruktiewe voorstel wat die belangrikheid van interafhanklikheid van die vormende prosesse beklemtoon en die fasilitering van die vyf vormende prosesse vereis. In hierdie hoofstuk is die riglyne wat in

Hoofstuk 2 en 3 geformuleer is, die spanning tussen tradisionalisering en herinterpretaise, onderrigmetodes, alles tot 'n geheel saamgevoeg. Hiervolgens is daar vyf bewegings. By elk van hierdie bewegings is 'n aanbeveling oor die verskillende onderwysmetodes gedoen. Die vyf bewegings tesame met die metodes wat met hulle verband hou, is:

<b>Beweging</b>	<b>Metode</b>
1) van opvoeding tot aktiewe herinnering van tradisie	Narratiewe metode
2) van vervreemding tot inskakeling	Fenomenologiese onderrigmetodes
3) van sterk individualisme tot vorming in 'n gemeenskap wat op verhoudings gebaseer is	Modellering Verhoudings Inter-generasie opvoeding
4) van onkunde tot transformasie met die oog op sosiale rekonstruksie	Konsensiëring (Conscientisation) Gevallestudies
5) van rasionale formaliteit tot misterie en kuns	Gestalt opvoedkundige metodes

## Acknowledgments

Upon completion of this thesis I feel gratitude and humility in an overwhelming measure. I am extremely grateful towards understandably impatient family and friends who kept asking, in Pope Julius II's words to Michelangelo about his work on the Sistine Chapel: "When will you make an end?" When attempting to thank adequately all those who have played a part in its creation, my own story rush through my mind's eye. If anyone has been inadvertently left out, I hope I will be forgiven the oversight.

The University of Stellenbosch offered me my first taste of the world of Theology. Under the tutelage of Professors Jonker, Theron and Hendriks, among many others, I learnt to understand grace. Fellow students like De Wet Strauss, Robert Vosloo and Thys Wentzel, among others, made my years there an intellectual delight.

At the Student Church in Stellenbosch, Coenie Burger and Frederick Marais were superlative mentors and guides. Fellow members of the congregation, especially, Christiaan Klopper, Willie Ward, Johan van der Merwe, to name but a few, provided a constant source of friendship and new ideas.

My participation in the BUVTON research group and subsequent study tour to the United States of America, formed my perceptions of faith formation beyond measure. This is especially true of the discussions I had with Dirkie Smit. I was further greatly formed through my work as youth worker in a congregation in Stellenbosch.

After completing my M Th. at the University of Stellenbosch, I was called to the Dutch Reformed Church Brackenfell. I thank Hannes van Wyk, Johan Mocke and Petrus Carstens for being such delightful colleagues. They challenged me to practice what I try to preach. The congregation provided me with a context for preaching, teaching and research. During the past two year Michiel van der Merwe's role as facilitator in our congregation also enriched my thinking.

It was here that Elsa (my wife) and I met John and Adrienne Carr for the second time. During the week they stayed with us, we had the privilege of interacting with these remarkable people. They opened up new doors for us in our vocation and the field of teaching, and challenged us to experiment, and to try and to grow. Their visit was the beginning of my deeper thoughts about faith formation. My thoughts were further challenged by his thorough, supportive and insightful comments on the dissertation. It is an honor that he spent so much time reading it chapter by chapter.

I especially wish to express my thanks to some of the members of four EPC (Experiment in Practical Christianity) groups, Gerhard Cruywagen, Marietjie Groenewald, Abri Marais, Dons and Elizabeth Muller, Johannes and Sarlene Horn, Nieldane Stodardt, Retha and

Wicus du Toit, Alfred and Mercia Horne, who provided me with hospitality and my first real "home" in Brackenfell.

A word of thanks to Dr. Prins for being an internal examiner and fitting the reading of the manuscript in at the last moment.

Jurgens Hendriks deserve all my thanks for the completion of this thesis. He, more than anyone else, have kept on pushing me. His encouragement, advice and unending support has sustained me in this undertaking. He never made me feel that my frequent requests for his time and opinion was a burden.

I am deeply indebted to Ronel Ward and especially Maurien Rautenbach, for their enormous investment in this book. The careful copy editing of Maurien helped to guide my erratic spelling and punctuation and my "Afrikaans" phrasing, towards greater clarity and precision.

A word of thanks to my parents-in-law, Koos and Alta Marais, for the use of "Sedgefield". In this beautiful setting I gained the mastery over this paper. I thank, my wife, Elsa, and the "in-crowd" Hennie and Heleen Meyer, Riana Veldtman, Piet and Elmien Kloppers, Louisa Botes, and Piet and Caren Burger, for they have provided me with affection, consolation, affirmation and faith. My parents, James and Marianna Simpson, and my brothers, JC and Jacques, continue to manifest love beyond measure.



# Traditioning and Reinterpretation

## The quest for methodology in faith formation

Summary	iii
Preface: A personal journey	xiii

### 1. INTRODUCTION 1

#### 1.1 Research-design 1

1.1.1 Research problem: 1

1.1.2 Research outline: 1

1.1.3 Research hypothesis: 3

#### 1.2 Why this study? 3

1.2.1 The emphasis on teaching in the Reformed tradition 4

1.2.2 The importance of education in the church 4

1.2.3 The need for forming values 5

1.2.4 The extent of the changing South African situation 6

1.2.5 The influence of Modernity and Postmodernity 7

1.2.5.1 Modernity and faith formation: Flight from authority 7

1.2.5.2 Postmodernity and faith formation: Flight from reason 10

1.2.6 The significant shift in the role of mainline churches 13

1.2.6.1 Declining membership 14

1.2.6.2 Declining influence 15

1.2.6.3 Ambiguous relationship 15

#### 1.3 A few brief definitions 16

1.3.1 Faith formation: Processes whereby Christian learning takes place 17

1.3.2 Teaching: intentional facilitation and learning 18

1.3.3 Indoctrination: fixed, unquestionable and closed learning outcomes 19

1.3.4 Method: systematic approach for reaching educational goals 19

1.3.5 Christian learning: all the time and everywhere 20

1.3.6 Christian education: intentional, systematic, planned processes 20

1.3.7 Faith formation revisited: Nurturing/*traditioning* and critical *reinterpretation* 22

#### 1.4 Practical theological perspectives: from practice to theory and back again 24

### 2. BETWEEN RATIONALISM AND EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE: EPISTEMOLOGY REVISIONED. 30

<b>2.1 The purpose of Christian religious education: wisdom</b>	<b>31</b>
2.1.1 The metapurpose: education for the Reign of God	32
2.1.2 The first existential purpose: education for Lived Christian Faith	33
2.1.3 The second existential purpose: education for wholeness of human freedom	33
2.1.4 Education for wisdom in Christian faith	34
2.1.4.1 Wisdom or "conation"	35
2.1.4.2 Remembrance of being	35
<b>2.2 Epistemology re-visioned: a historic search for wisdom</b>	<b>36</b>
2.2.1 The great architects of the epistemological debate	38
2.2.1.1 Plato: Ideas over all	38
2.2.1.2 Aristotle: Living "three lives"	40
2.2.1.3 Augustine: Truth already within	44
2.2.1.4 Aquinas: First in the senses	45
2.2.1.5 Descartes: A doubter, no doubt?	47
2.2.1.6 Locke: What you see is ...	48
2.2.1.7 Kant: Knowledge by construction	50
2.2.2 History of education	53
2.2.2.1 Epistemology in the educational debate	54
2.2.2.2 Epistemology in the Protestant history of Christian education	55
<b>2.3 Conclusions on the epistemological debate</b>	<b>57</b>
2.3.1. An epistemological question: <i>How do we come to reliable knowledge?</i>	57
2.3.2 Four significant movements	60
2.3.2.1 Marxism	60
2.3.1.2 Phenomenology	60
2.3.1.3 Existentialism	61
2.3.1.4 Pragmatism	62
2.3.3 Bridging the dualism	62
2.3.4 Conclusions	67
2.3.4.1 The importance of active remembrance of tradition in faith formation.	67
2.3.4.2 The importance of engaging people as agent-subjects-in-relationship in faith formation	70
2.3.4.3 The importance of mystery, art and poetry in faith formation	72
<b>3. BETWEEN FORMATION AND TRANSFORMATION: SOCIALISATION RE-AFFIRMED</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>3.1 A quest for the context of faith formation</b>	<b>74</b>

3.1.1 Bushnell: Christian nurture through the family	76
3.1.2 Coe: Education by the whole social ethos	77
3.1.3 Nelson: Communication of faith through the Christian community	77
3.1.4 Westerhoff III: Christian formation through liturgy	78
<b>3.2 The importance of critical reflection on the sociocultural situation.</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>3.3 Conclusions drawn from the socialisation debate</b>	<b>81</b>
3.3.1 A socialisation question: What is the formative influence of our social context?	81
3.3.2 Conclusions	81
3.3.2.1 The importance of formation in a relating community	81
3.3.2.2 The importance of transformation for social reconstruction	82
3.3.2.3 The importance of immersion through mystery, art and poetry in faith formation	82
<b>4. THE TEACHING OFFICE IN THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>4.1 Martin Luther: having a living witness to the gospel</b>	<b>84</b>
4.1.1 Multiple teaching authorities for the conservation and interpretation of Scripture	86
<b>4.2 John Calvin: having a teaching role in society</b>	<b>88</b>
4.2.1 The teaching office	89
4.2.1.1 The Academy of Geneva and the education of the public	90
4.2.1.2 Catechetical instruction in the church	91
4.2.2 Three central tasks of the teaching office	92
4.2.2.1 Transmission: determining the normative beliefs and practices	93
4.2.2.2 Reinterpretation of normative beliefs and practices.	93
4.2.2.3 Institutionalisation: forming the means of education	94
<b>4.3 The tension between structure and Spirit</b>	<b>94</b>
4.3.1 Different centres of authority within the church	95
4.3.2 The congregation as center for practical theological reflection	96
<b>4.4 A participative and dialogical pedagogy: Shared Christian Praxis</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>5. TOWARDS A CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSAL</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>5.1 Traditioning and reinterpretation</b>	<b>102</b>
5.1.1 Traditioning: formative education	103
5.1.2 Reinterpretation: critical education	104

5.1.3 The interdependence of the formative processes	105
<b>5.2 Facilitating five processes for faith formation</b>	<b>110</b>
Hidden curriculum	111
5.2.1 From <i>schooling</i> to active <i>remembrance</i> of tradition	112
5.2.1.1 Moving from schooling (banking)	113
5.2.1.2 Moving to active remembrance of tradition	115
5.2.1.3 Proponents of this move	117
5.2.1.4 Narrative method	118
5.2.2 From alienation to engagement	120
5.2.2.1 Moving from alienation (ignoring people's stories)	121
5.2.2.2 Moving to engagement (agent-subjects-in-relationship)	121
5.2.2.3 Proponents of this movement	124
5.2.2.4 Phenomenological method	125
5.2.3 From rugged <i>individualism</i> to <i>formation</i>	128
5.2.3.1 Moving from rugged individualism	129
5.2.3.2 Moving to formation in a relating community	130
5.2.3.3 Proponents of this movement	131
5.2.3.4 Creating community	133
5.2.4 From <i>ignorance</i> to <i>transformation</i>	135
5.2.4.1 Moving from ignorance (privatised faith)	135
5.2.4.2 Moving to transformation for social reconstruction	136
5.2.4.3 Proponents of this movement	136
5.2.4.4 Conscientisation method	137
5.2.4.5 Case study method	139
5.2.5 From rational <i>formality</i> to <i>mystery</i>	141
5.2.5.1 Moving from rational formality	141
5.2.5.2 Moving to mystery and art	143
5.2.5.3 Proponents of this movement	144
5.2.5.4 Gestalt method	148
<b>5.3 Multidimensional faith formation: Keeping many tensions together</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>5.4 Conclusions</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Postscript: Ministers and the rethinking of faith formation</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>6. BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>162</b>

### *Preface: A personal journey*

"What can I do to stop boring people with the gospel?" That was the first naive question I asked about faith formation. Later on I learned that "not boring" people was not the best motivation, but it was beginning. Then another question began to interest me: "How do people grow in faith?" With this question as a starting point, this study began to develop. I asked myself this question when I was a student and member of the Dutch Reformed Student Congregation in Stellenbosch. I was a Bible study group leader and making a terrible mess of it. As a result, I began to concentrate on the question: How does one communicate faith?

My problem was that I was familiar with youth groups who primarily used "banking" to communicate (teach) faith. I experienced two conversions on the road to a more experiential-communal way of faith formation. The first conversion was during my fourth year when I discovered "storytelling" as a method which helped people in small groups to deepen their commitment to each other. For a time that was all I did as the leader of groups -- I helped people to tell their stories.

Then I had my second conversion. In my fifth and sixth year *grace* descended on me. I became aware of the fact that we do not only tell our stories to each other, we also listen to God's story of grace. Then I began to understand that faith formation occurs when God transforms my story in the light of His Story.

At the same time I was introduced to Thomas Groome's *Christian Religious Education*. His book guided me towards a better understanding of the process of faith formation. What finally persuaded me to write about this subject was a tour to America with a group of ministers and theologians. We visited a wide range of theological faculties and at every one of them I asked the lecturer in Christian education which books she or he would recommend. Groome had his place in almost all these lists.

What follows is a Reformed theologian's systematisation and application of the work of Thomas Groome and Richard Osmer to the process of faith formation.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Research-design

### 1.1.1 Research problem:

A problem that confronts Christian educators is that very few local inclusive educational theories<sup>1</sup> exist for the formation and transformation of faith, and that Christian educators have an insufficient basis for choosing between various educational methods in their efforts to form and transform people's lives. Apart from the fact that different models have been listed, there is a need for an overview of existing literature on the various emphases in Christian religious education and an application of these theories to the South African situation. This is important because there is consensus about the fact that ministers and congregations should be involved in the formation of values, but there is no clarity on how this should be done. The church in South Africa is faced with the task of forming values and shaping people to live in a Christian way. For this purpose a theory on the formation of faith needs to be developed, an overview on the literature of Christian religious education is necessary and methods to achieve this must be clarified.

The problem this study wants to address can be expressed as: *education in the church does not form people who are religious in a Christian way.*

This is all the more important because mainline churches in South Africa are in transition. This crisis is not confined to South African churches only. As will be seen later, it is a much broader phenomenon.

### 1.1.2 Research outline:

The literature indicates that various people have proposed that different religious educational methods should be grouped together. There is a need for a unifying theory which shows the relationship or interaction between these methods, or suggests methods that may be used to further each of these emphases.

---

<sup>1</sup> The theory that undergirds an educational practice is usually taken to "be an attempt to understand, explain and predict what is happening in the practice: theory explains why, when, how, and under what circumstances a practice works". Astley (1994:26) characterises educational theory as a practical theory that "seeks to formulate and justify principles of action in education (showing us what should be done, rather than just providing theoretical understanding), but which involves practical reasoning and reflection on values in formulating traditional principles for educational practice".

The theoretical assumptions of this study are (i) that a broad literature study will provide an overview of the field of Christian religious education, and (ii) that a more inclusive theory can be generated that will serve as a basis for the decision that needs to be made on methodology in the formation of faith.

The study will be rooted in research, based on an exploratory study of the extensive literature in this field. Research will include a reworking of educational *experts'* systematisation of the field with special emphasis on the work of Groome and Osmer. In this study we will strive not just to repeat facts from the studies completed by these leaders in the field of Christian Education, but to point out correlations between these systematisations of the epistemological and socialisation debate. Furthermore, it brings this research in relationship with the South African situation. As a result, a unifying theory is developed which points out the relationship between various methods, and suggests methods that can be used to further each of these emphases.

The theory to be developed will be descriptive in so far as it constitutes the process of formation. Validity, however, can only be tested through a longitudinal study, which falls outside the scope of this project.

The study follows the following design:

Chapter 1 offers introductory material about the nature and importance of faith formation and on the focus of this study.

Chapter 2 approaches faith formation by means of a study of the main schools of epistemology. We will focus on three important emphases that emerge from the epistemological debate, using the work of Thomas H. Groome.

Chapter 3 approaches the formation of faith by means of a systematisation of the socialisation debate, with particular reference to formation, transformation and mystery in faith formation. While Chapter 2 draws primarily on literature relating to the epistemological debate, the main contribution in chapter 3 is found in the socialisation debate.

Chapter 4 will test the assumptions made on faith formation against the theological understanding of the church's teaching ministry as expressed in the thoughts of Martin Luther and John Calvin (as systematised by Richard R Osmer).

This chapter will explain how from the very beginning of the church's existence, a tension has existed in the teaching ministry between: (a) *traditioning*: the need for institutional roles and agencies by which the church can teach with authority, and (b) *reinterpretation*: the role of the Holy Spirit as the teacher of every individual believer.

In Chapter 5 a constructive proposal for evaluating educational methods is developed. This will be accomplished by discussing epistemology, theology, and educational methods in relation to one another. Educational methods will be evaluated with theological perspectives in mind.

Chapter 5 suggests five processes in education that will facilitate faith formation. Each process will be linked to an educational method, thus answering the question: Which changes should be made in the methods of faith formation in a changing South Africa to shape people that are religious in a Christian way?

### **1.1.3 Research hypothesis:**

The study has the following hypothesis: Faith formation will shape people that are religious in a Christian way if

a) it traditions and reinterprets

b) it facilitates the following five processes:

from schooling towards active remembrance of tradition,

from alienation towards engagement (Agents-Subjects-in-relationship),

from rugged individualism towards formation in a relating community,

from ignorance towards transformation for social reconstruction, and

from rational formality towards mystery and art; and

c) it can keep different tensions together.

There is a tension between these five processes which must be kept in balance. If one of these should be neglected consistently over some time, there will only be one-sided faith formation or no faith formation at all.<sup>2</sup>

## **1.2 Why this study?**

In the 1970's people asked "Will our children have faith?" (Westerhoff III 1976), but strangely, against predictions, faith did not vanish overnight. Lewis Rambo (1993:1), describes this phenomenon aptly: "A scant quarter-century ago most social scientists, and indeed many theologians, predicted the secularization of society and pronounced the death of God. Those predictions and pronouncements were clearly wrong. ... Forces of religious vitality have not been destroyed; they have merely been regrouping." But not all

---

<sup>2</sup> A last observation before looking at the relevance of this subject: It is not easy to avoid the appearance of sexism. Instead of constantly using cumbersome phrases, I have sometimes written about human beings in the feminine, and sometimes in the masculine. I think it is proper to permit oneself this shorthand, only if it is adopted in both forms.



spirituality, religion and faith are Christian. This is forcing scholars to re-examine the formation of Christian faith. As we shall see, thinking about teaching and formation of faith is not new to the Reformed tradition.

### **1.2.1 The emphasis on teaching in the Reformed tradition**

This study is important for Reformed Theology. "There can be no doubt that Calvin thought of the church's teaching ministry as a crucial. A strong case can be made that he thought of the church *primarily* as a teacher. At many points in his writing, the most important image of the church he offers, focus on the nourishment and education it provides. This seems to spill over from his use of teaching-learning as a central metaphor by which to describe key facets of God's accommodation to humanity, especially to the elect. Words and phrases that have to do with teaching and learning appear again and again in the Institutes as describing the divine-human relationship: '*pupil*', '*instruction*', '*schoolmaster*', '*educate*', and '*tutor*', to name only a few" (Osmer 1990:115).

Stotts (1985: 26,27), writes "One - if not the - genius of the Presbyterian tradition has been its valuing of and commitment to education as an instrument for faithfulness. If you want to know who we are as ... members of the Reformed tradition - we are a people committed to education as an instrument for faithfulness. That is our genius. If the Baptists have found their genius in evangelism and church growth, if the Anglicans have found theirs in liturgy, then Presbyterians have found their distinctiveness in education."

The first reason why this study is important, is that it is an attempt to begin to restore the "teaching office" of the church, as Osmer calls it.

### **1.2.2 The importance of education in the church**

A second reason for the importance of education is evident from research that emphasises the relationship between mature faith and Christian education. This was clearly spelled out in a 1986 research project conducted in mainline churches. This three-and-a-half-year long research<sup>3</sup> project by the Search Institute in six Protestant denominations in America<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> This study included both quantitative and qualitative data. More than 11,000 individuals in 561 randomly chosen congregations provided in-depth, survey-based data on faith, loyalty, religious biography, congregational life, and the dynamics of Christian educational programming.

<sup>4</sup> The project, originally conceived to evaluate Christian education in the mainline churches, initially involved five American mainline denominations: The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church. These five denominations include about 85

investigated, among other things, the role of religious education in faith formation (Benson and Eklin 1990). It came to the following conclusion:

"Christian education matters much more than we expected. Of all the areas of congregational life we examined, involvement in an effective Christian education program has the strongest tie to a person's growth in faith and to loyalty to one's congregation and denomination. While other congregational factors also matter, nothing matters more than effective Christian education. And this is as true for adults as it is for adolescents."

The study (Benson and Eklin 1990: 4-5), reached the following conclusions on the importance of the process of faith formation:

- In examining the religious biographies of youth, the two experiences most associated with higher faith maturity are the level of family religiousness and the amount of **exposure to Christian education** (my emphasis).
- In examining the religious biographies of adults, one of the two lifetime experiences most associated with higher faith maturity is the amount of **exposure to Christian education** (my emphasis).
- On the impact of congregational life on faith maturity, the congregational factor most associated with helping people grow in faith maturity is the degree of **effectiveness in Christian educational programming education** (my emphasis). This finding is true for both youths and adults.
- Effectiveness in Christian education is also associated with greater denominational and congregational loyalty. This finding is true for both youths and adults.
- **Effective Christian education** is as important for the faith development of adults as it is for the **education** of the youth (my emphasis).

This research clearly shows the importance of a further study on faith formation.

### 1.2.3 The need for forming values

The subject of this study is important, in the third place, because of the renewed emphasis in theological circles on the formation of values. Hoge, Johnson and Luidens's research on the continuing decline and marginalisation of mainline Protestantism in America, *Vanishing Boundaries* (1994:204), concludes that the most important commodity that

---

percent of the membership in what is commonly called "mainline Protestantism". The Southern Baptist Convention, because of its success in educational programming, was invited by the five original partners to join the project.

Boomers wants is "religious education for children and associated support for family life". They say, "We were amazed that 96 percent of the sample - including churches and unchurched - said they would like religious education for their own children! It was nearly unanimous. Almost all parents want religious education for their children, and most want to get it in Sunday schools. In our society today there are few alternative suppliers of this kind of education, and none are likely to appear soon. What Sunday school offers cannot be purchased anywhere else ... An obvious implication for churches is that they should offer first-rate religious education." This should include not only cognitive elements of learning about the Bible and church teachings, but definitely also moral education and character education.

#### **1.2.4 The extent of the changing South African situation**

This study is also important because South African Churches will have to learn to form and nurture faith in a rapidly changing South Africa. Professor Hentie Boshoff (1995:1), describes the time of economic, political, social and moral changes in South Africa as an "age of discontinuities". The nineties will not be "business as usual". The church will have to reposition herself. This is important because of changes in the society. South African society functions according to new roles, for example, note how state subsidies are allocated. Furthermore the members of the congregations experience rapid changes in their living and working environments. The church are being forced to take note of these changes. The present status quo can not be continued.

Boshoff (1995:25-34), did the first comprehensive research on the value profiles of white South Africans after the first comprehensive democratic election of April 1994. He indicates the movements in values and value diversity in the white population. Out of this research he makes the following recommendations for the church:

- The church should take note of the Afrikaners' search for roots and group identity. There is a real threat that churches may lose their sense of identity.
- The church will not be saved through "tricks" in the sense of customer friendly worship services alone. Boshoff reports that members (even the youth) have need of a deeper faith. Preaching and teaching must be more relevant and applicable to life.
- Members are looking for a more informal style, without losing good order. Linked with this, is a focus on relationships and the building of a faith community. They experience a lack of warmth and contact with fellow members in congregations.

- Boshoff also identifies the members' need for more celebration in congregations. His research shows that people do not only come to church for the sermon but also to meet God.

The South African landscape is clearly changing and for a church to keep its identity, the teaching office will become increasingly important.

### **1.2.5 The influence of Modernity and Postmodernity**

A study of faith formation is important not only because of our roots and a changing South African context, but also because of cultural and social developments in the world at large. This will be discussed briefly under the headings *Modernity* and *Postmodernity*, taking the possible disadvantages of these terms<sup>5</sup> into account. It is an overview that does not discuss all the cultural aspects involved, only those affecting faith formation.

#### ***1.2.5.1 Modernity and faith formation: Flight from authority***

Wells (1994:29), writes: "If in the Middle Ages Catholicism was at the center of the culture, posing an overwhelming challenge to Reformers, modernity is in the center of our culture, and the challenge it poses is even more serious. We have to contend with the modern mind, with its complete lack of interest in truth - especially the truth of God."

The term modernity, as first applied to works of art and literature, specified certain attributes of style, but often the word refers to the attitudes that underlie these styles. It usually refers to the cultural mood which began to emerge, especially in literature, towards the beginning of the twentieth century (McGrath 1996:30). Jeffrey Stout (in McGrath 1996:31), points out that "modern thought was born in a crisis of authority, took shape in flight from authority, and aspired from the start to autonomy from all traditional influence whatsoever".

What is the influence of modernity on faith formation? Osmer (1990:30-45), describes the relationship between individualism and the demise of the teaching authority in the church. A short summary of his argument follows:

The structural and cultural pluralism<sup>6</sup> that is part of modernity creates conditions for individualism to flourish. If the American life is anything to go by, individualism in the

---

<sup>5</sup> See Sampson, Samuel and Sugden's (7-10) discussion of these terms.

<sup>6</sup> Newbigin (1989: 1), draw our attention to the fact that in our pluralist society plurality "is celebrated as things to be approved and cherished". It is conceived to be a proper characteristic of the secular society.

mainline churches will intensify during the coming years<sup>7</sup>. People will see themselves increasingly as relatively autonomous believers who are on a personal spiritual journey with little real involvement in a religious community. Under the influence of modern individualism, communal ties and authority have become deeply problematic, especially in religion.

Osmer identifies three influences of modernity that the mainline churches in America internalised during the 1960's:

1) *A renewed emphasis on personal experience*. Spiritual disciplines and growth groups were designed to help deepen people's "awareness of God's presence".

2) *The emancipation of the self was identified with salvation*. The legitimate call for the oppressed (Latin American liberationist and North American feminist theologies) to become the subjects of their own history was transposed into an emancipatory quest for self-fulfillment. Salvation was little more than the individual's growth towards wholeness.

3) *A widespread fear of institutional authority*. Individuals began to see themselves as standing against large-scale bureaucratic institutions. They developed a deep distrust of social conventions and a fear of authority.

This internalisation of modern individualism of the church, weakens the limited authority of the church. This frequently lures the mainline churches into thinking of their ministries primarily in terms of "meeting needs" (Wells 1994:14). As such it is a capitulation to modern individualism which makes the self the arbiter of life's meaning and purpose.

But this is only half the threat to faith formation. Equally dangerous is the lure of *counter-modern authoritarianism* or *religious fundamentalism* (Newbigin 1995:35). Under counter-modern authoritarianism Osmer (1990:38-45), understands the attempt of contemporary conservative Protestantism<sup>8</sup> to reassert the objective authority of the religious tradition. Fundamentalist and Pentecostal churches exhibit strong counter-modernising tendencies in the face of the potential *relativisation* of traditional authority. "They explicitly formulate their identity and program in opposition to certain features of modern life. In the face of cultural pluralism and its relativizing of all religious traditions,

---

<sup>7</sup> Jongma-Tieleman (1991:12-24), notes the same tendency in the European mind.

<sup>8</sup> In America this group represents a large and varied cultural tradition, including at least four different religious and theological streams: the Baptist tradition, the Holiness-Pentecostal tradition, the Anabaptist tradition, and the wing of the Reformed-Confessional tradition that has internalised American revivalism.

counter-modernizers affirm the authority of the one true faith. In the face of structural pluralism, with its tendency to confine religion to the private sphere, they frequently attempt to reassert the authority of a particular religion for society as a whole. If modernization means the rationalization of more and more spheres of life, counter-modernizers resist this by positing a religious authority that is not subject to modern inquiry in any form."

Osmer (1990:41), thinks the rise of conservative Protestantism is an aggressive counterattack to the rise of liberal theology and the social gospel movement of the 1920's. "At this point conservative Protestantism began to take on many features of other counter-modernizing movements, especially in its fundamentalist form. It began to form a subculture in our society that attempted to insulate its members from the perils of modern life. 'Christian' radio stations, colleges, bookstores, and schools began to appear in which 'Christian' orthodoxy and its accompanying morality could be maintained. Research indicates that conservative Protestantism was most successful at maintaining its worldview during this century among those portions of the population exposed least to modernising trends through higher education, occupation, and so forth." But this have changed. This cultural tradition does not only appeal to those who are farthest removed from modernization. "In a time of rapid cultural change and experimentation, its counter-modernizing approach has become increasingly plausible to many who have come to view the moral ethos of contemporary America as collapsing."

Almost inevitably this reassertion takes on reactive overtones. "Faith is identified with conformity to social norms and theological beliefs. Submission to group norms is demanded. The role of struggle, doubt, and questioning as important dimensions of faith is eliminated. Lost is the capacity for self-criticism and for openness to the expansive insights of other perspectives" (Osmer 1990:39).

Osmer (1990:45), raises two points of criticism on this cultural tradition: "(1) Its preoccupation with the maintenance of orthodoxy has rendered it unable to acknowledge and account for the way that it is historically mediated and (2) it has a consistent tendency to move in the direction of theological and social authoritarianism."

Like the American churches, South African churches also have a shifting role in contemporary African life. It is unlikely that either modern individualism or counter-modern authoritarianism will have the resources necessary for a revitalisation of life (Wells 1994:19).

The old Apartheid paradigm could not handle the structural problems South Africa were facing in the eighties. Reform had to go hand in hand with a change in paradigm. This

was made easier by the now famous February 1990 address of the then State President, F.W. de Klerk. This brought the country into a new era of a developing democracy.

The democratisation of society has important implications for the church's educational system. Decision making will have less of a "top down" character and more of a "bottom up" character. This has implications for any authoritarian educational approach (Boshoff 1995:5).

We face the task of formulating an authoritative method of faith formation that will not lapse into rugged individualism on the one hand or fundamentalist authoritarianism on the other. Perhaps this shifting role of churches will bring about the recovery of a deeper sense of the roots of the Reformed church and will lessen the dependence on the surrounding culture<sup>9</sup>. If this happens, it may well be that these churches will come out of the transition with a more authentic witness. And, says Osmer, an important part of the mainline churches' recovery of their Reformation heritage is the uncovering of a dynamic understanding of the teaching office in the church.

#### ***1.2.5.2 Postmodernity and faith formation: Flight from reason***

"By the end of the 1960s, modernity has lost its Enlightenment soul. Thus it was that post-modernity began to emerge in the 1970's" (Wells 1994:46). This was a direct result of the collapse of the confidence in reason, and a more general disillusionment with the so-called 'modern' world" (McGrath 1996:164). Marva J. Dawn (in her book *Reaching out without dumbing down - A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (1995: 36)), illustrates the stream of postmodernists who took the trajectory of contingency and relativity to a ruthless extreme by telling a baseball joke. It makes the progression in history from premodern belief in objective truth to postmodernity's deconstructivism quite clear. Dawn wrote: "A premodern umpire once said, 'There's balls and there's strikes, and I calls 'em as they is.' Believing in an absolute truth that could be found, earlier societies looked for evidence to discover that truth. A modern umpire would say instead, 'There's balls and there's strikes, and I calls 'em as I sees 'em.' For the modernist, truth is to be found in one's own experience. Now a postmodern umpire would say, 'There's balls and there's strikes, and they ain't nothing till I calls 'em.' No truth exists unless we create it."

---

<sup>9</sup> This would be in line with the neo-Reformation theology or neo-orthodoxy movement that found expression in the thoughts of theologians like Karl Barth, Emile Brunner, H. Richard Niebuhr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Reinhold Niebuhr.

Now it is obviously true that all our eternal truths and all our metanarratives are products of particular human histories. They are all socially and historically embodied. They do not exist in a superhistorical, supercultural stratosphere. They are embodied in a particular language, using concepts, symbols and models which have been developed in particular human communities. They are part of human culture, of particular human cultures. There is no reason to deny this (Newbigin 1995:74). Postmodernism, McGrath (1996:184) writes, "is generally taken to be something of a cultural sensibility without absolutes, fixed certainties or foundations, which takes delight in pluralism and divergence, and which aims to think through the radical 'situatedness' of all human thought." He summarises the differences between Modernity and Postmodernity as follows:

<b>Modernity</b>	<b>Postmodernity</b>
Purpose	Play
Design	Chance
Hierarchy	Anarchy
Centering	Dispersing
Selection	Combination

This is not the place to give a comprehensive description of postmodernity. Here the writer only wishes to emphasise postmodernism's move from positivism to absolute relativism; it is a *flight from reason* (Wells 1994:65). "Where modernists tolerate relativism, postmodernists celebrate it. Where modernists, aware of the obstacles in the way of objectivity, take this as a challenge and make a strenuous effort to attain as much objectivity and unbiased truth as possible, postmodernists take the rejection of absolute truth as a deliverance from all truth, a release from the obligation to maintain any degree of objectivity or aspire to any kind of truth. ... Postmodernism (rejects) ... the "discipline" of knowledge and rationality, (it) also (rejects) the "discipline" of society and authority" (Himmelfarb in Dawn 1995:37).

To understand the challenge of Postmodernity for the formation of faith, Pierre Babin's distinction between three totally different and all-embracing systems or cultures will be helpful. He shows how faith is communicated in each of these cultures.

#### 1. Immersion in an oral culture as faith communication

In oral cultures ancestral knowledge, traditional wisdom, rules of life, intimately connected with the practice of communal living, are developed and passed on from age to age through oral tradition. This culture prevailed from Old Testament times until the fifteenth century, the age of the invention of printing. Oral communication were characterised by the "preeminence of communal life, by liturgy and practice, by stories and images, and by



the sacred part played by the person teaching". Evangelisation was proclamation accompanied by miracles. There were also a long period of initiation, punctuated by symbolic and liturgical acts and instructions within the community. Babin (1991:20), says that this form of catechesis was a catechesis by immersion.

People lived a strong community life marked entirely by religion. "The members were initiated into the Christian faith in the same way that they learned their mother-tongue, without systematic teaching." (Babin 1991: 20) Immersion means: to understand is to participate. Belonging, forming part of a community and being grafted onto the societal structure are more important than understanding. The places and moments of learning were not in a school setting but during the feasts of the church. Liturgical participation became central. Immersion did not lead to a strict intellectual structure, but it created a doctrine of life. As in modern audiovisual publicity "memorization was by means of symbolic procedures, in conjunction with bodily gestures and in association with acts of life, and a dramatic presentation of images with the aim of producing a particular effect." Images played an important part. It is interesting to note that the closer we come to modern times, "the more the text gains in importance over the pictures" (Babin 1991: 23).

Babin summarises the oral community as follows: "Solidarity with the community and in society at that time was much more important than a strong intellectual framework in the mind of each individual. Harmony in prayer and in performance of liturgical actions was more decisive for full community membership than a logical synthesis of the truths of faith." (Babin 1991: 28)

## 2. Catechisms as faith communication in the age of print media

After the invention of printing by Johannes Gutenberg between 1440 and 1456, Christianity developed a new agreement on the methods of learning faith: "The need to impart our doctrine and firm moral teaching to the masses; the need to train personnel, particularly by establishing schools and seminaries; and the need to instruct and educate the humble people in the most concrete and practical way, by producing short and precise treatises." (Babin 1991: 25)

People had to learn the theological foundations of Christianity (Babin 1991: 25). To accomplish this, the catechist became a kind of school teacher. The catechism had to be learnt by heart<sup>10</sup>. The communication of faith was characterised by "the strictness in doctrine and uniformity of knowledge".

---

<sup>10</sup> This can be seen clearly and strikingly in the preface to Luther's *Kleine Katechismus* of 1529.

### 3. An audiovisual form of faith communication in the age of electronic media

Babin shows how a double crisis brought us into the electronic age. The first was the Gutenberg crisis when the catechetical movement reacted against a notional and cerebral faith that lacked spiritual roots. The second was the crisis brought about by the rapid penetration of the media and human studies into all areas of life. This led to a rapid restructuring of faith's intellectual foundations and a rejection of the dogmatic and cultic formulas. Young people now go to church not because of the churchgoing tradition but because they are "looking for something beyond - radicality, meaning and love, a sense of purity, and even enthusiasm and mystical experience" (Babin 1991: 30). Audiovisual media is associated more with pleasure and entertainment than with information and calculation.

How should communication be in an age of electronic media? Babin (1991: 31), says: "I do not think it is possible today to separate an audiovisual form of catechesis, one that appeals to the heart and to human feelings, from a purely notional form, one aimed more precisely at the intellect and reason." He calls this stereo catechesis. It is based on entertainment media and data processing media that appeal to the imagination. "Speaking the language of the television is making people accept ideas through their emotions." This however is not "Gutenberg with illustrations!" We have to go beyond the ideas, theories, and formulas and be more open to personal experience through imagination and symbols. (Babin 1991: 33)

Babin (1991: 41), goes on to show how the moral status of the present generations is influenced by the use of audiovisual electronics. Earlier morality was governed (in the village so to say) by tradition and solidarity. Authority lay in the leaders (pastor, priest, mayor, teacher), the elders (being watched constantly), and Nature (source of regular rhythms). Then came electricity. The electronic universe shaped another type of moral behaviour. "Electricity and everything that flows from it (light, television, computers, interconnected equipment) take the human being into a vast network which, by invading every part of the person, leads him or her inescapably to become part of that whole and to take its shape."

#### 1.2.6 The significant shift in the role of mainline churches

The last reason for the relevance of this study lies in what Osmer (1990:4), argues in *A Teachable Spirit - Recovering the Teaching Office in the Church*; a shift in the role of mainline churches in relation to the broader culture. He writes about American mainline churches: there are "serious questions about whether the mainline churches have lost their ability to articulate a dynamic, person-changing, and culture-transforming vision of religion". These churches must now face a cultural situation radically different from what

they have faced in the past. He writes in the belief that: "A strong teaching ministry is especially needed in the face of the modern individualism and counter-modern authoritarianism that are so prevalent in American society."

What Osmer (1990:6), says about American mainline churches may also be said of mainline churches in South Africa. Mainline Protestant churches in South Africa

- 1) have a declining membership,
- 2) lost their role as the dominant force in shaping the values of the broader culture<sup>11</sup> and have trouble with their newfound status as one of many players in an increasingly pluralistic society, and
- 3) have a recent ambiguous relationship with the traditional civic faith of South African life.

#### ***1.2.6.1 Declining membership***

Hoge, Johnson and Luidens (1994:207) diagnosed the crisis in the continuing decline and marginalisation of mainline Protestantism in America as a crisis of authority resulting from "the expansion of liberal higher education, pluralism, and cross-cultural awareness". Broad education and maximum exposure to cultural variety are at the order of the day in South Africa. This process cannot be stopped.

In *Facing the facts* (1995:17-32), Hendriks indicates how the same decline is playing itself out in the "white" and "coloured" population groups in South Africa, as is the membership of mainline denominations. He ascribes the decline<sup>12</sup> of the mainline denominations to several factors:

- 1) There is a shift in the black population group away from the black mainline churches towards the African Independent Churches.
- 2) The secularisation process in the "white" and "coloured" communities.
- 3) There is a distinct shift towards small-group orientated churches with their more intimate or personal approach.
- 4) The Dutch Reformed Church is losing members because of the negative birth rate.

---

<sup>11</sup> Jongsma-Tieleman (1991:18), points out that Dutch churches have also lost their "monopoliepositie" (position of monopoly).

<sup>12</sup> This is in sharp contrast to the African Independent Churches who is the fastest growing churches in the country

In *South African Denominational Growth and Decline 1911-1991* (1995:41), Hendriks proposes, although as a hypothesis, that the political transition period had a huge impact on the decline.

#### ***1.2.6.2 Declining influence***

There are also sociological factors, such as secularisation, that explain the decline. Hendriks (1995:49), states that this process "is leading to the death of denominationalism. The state-church partnership is disintegrating in many countries, including South Africa. This is helping local faith communities to take responsibility for Christian values and for the building up of believers." In future, the South African churches will have to function in an ever increasing pluralistic society. More and more religious options are becoming available, and they are treated with greater tolerance. Mainline churches now experience that they are only one group of players among many on the religious scene. The declining influence is further accelerated by the ever increasing separation of church and state.

Many will, no doubt, view this greater pluralism in negative terms, and paint romantic pictures of the "good old (Apartheid) days". But the stress this transition is putting on mainline churches is not all bad. They are now freer to discover a new vision of their vocation in Africa. We are now less inclined to confuse Christianity with Nationalism.

#### ***1.2.6.3 Ambiguous relationship***

Protestantism (and the Dutch Reformed Church in particular) has played a special role in fostering a vision of South Africa as standing in a special relationship to God. We (the white people) were God's torch bearers in Dark Africa. This made it very difficult to maintain a distinction between love of God and love of country. American-style capitalism (for the whites), "Christian" government, and individualism virtually have been identified with the will of God. The Dutch Reformed Church lost the healthy tension with the surrounding cultures.

In *Struggling for a new identity* (1995:142-148), Frederick Marais indicates how the theological myth of apartheid shaped a part of the faith community in South Africa. "According to the system of guilt projection, this isolation brought about the development of an apocalyptic mentality, which meant that the 'righteous' group increasingly understood itself to be the only true people of God."

As a result this amalgamation of nationalism and the Christian way of life made the role of clergy problematic. Clergy who tried to be prophetic, frequently publicly advocated a position at variance with many in the pews. This dynamic fostered a privatised faith, as described by Osmer (1990:11): "Not only did this create deep ideological divisions within

many congregations, it also gave rise to a hands-off view of civic faith. In the face of real and potential controversy in this area, many in the mainline churches called for their leaders to abandon altogether preaching and teaching about matters of public concern. This has reinforced the privatization of religion.”

For many different reasons neither the teaching of our children nor the education of our adults, form people who are religious in a Christian way in the changing South Africa.

As indicated above there are two false answers to the problem. The first is rugged individualism. As Osmer has stated, this leads to the demise of the teaching authority of the church. The second answer is the one counter-modernising groups give to the problem - the reassertion of traditional forms of authority. The latter leads to authoritarianism.

To form people that are religious in a Christian way, this study proposes a "Third way", as Osmer (1990:46) calls it. This "Third way" will have to *transmit* and *reinterpret* Scripture, and *tradition* and *transform* people.

The Dutch Reformed Church is clearly in the midst of transition. Considering the role and status of the church in South African society, it would do well to focus temporarily on issues of identity and heritage. It is appropriate, as Osmer (1990:12), says, "for mainline churches to focus temporarily on their own boundaries". This study proposes to explore the resources of Protestantism and the broader Christian tradition which could help the contemporary South African Protestant church to begin to think creatively about the form faith formation<sup>13</sup> might take on today.

### **1.3 A few brief definitions**

At the beginning of any study in this field some discussion about terminology is inevitable. The problem is exacerbated because in literature and various practices the same phrases are often applied to radically different activities.

Why is this so? It is clear that there is a vigorous debate in both secular and religious education about how humans are shaped. Browning (1991:237-242), explains the difficulty of coming to a definition of faith formation. He shows that the major parties in the educational debate are the narrativists, the deontologists, and the teleologists. These three parties parallel the first three levels of his model of practical reason. Each of them would have a different definition for the meaning of "formation":

---

<sup>13</sup> Osmer uses the word "Teaching Office". With "office" he refers to the *function* that something carries out in contrast to "office" meaning *position* or *institutional role*. "Teaching office" thus refers to the tasks, responsibilities or *teaching function* of the church.

<i>Major parties</i>	<i>Level of practical reason</i>	<i>Definition of formation</i>	<i>Leading representatives</i>
----------------------	----------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

<b>narrativists</b>	visional	Formation by participation in communities of memory who have powerful stories to tell about their origins and destinies.	Dykstra, Nelson, Westerhoff, Metz, Hauerwas, Miller, and Groome.
<b>deontologists</b>	obligational	Formation is the maturation that happens under the impact of diverse experiences which enhance the complexification of cognitive structures.	Fowler, Wilcox, Kohlberg, Rawls
<b>teleologists</b>	tendency-need	Formation happens when our affections and emotions pursue experiences of the satisfying, the actualising, or the loving - the <i>good</i> .	Freud

Browning (1991:238), comments on these three models: "It is often thought that these three models of learning and development are in tension with one another, possibly in total contradiction. There is tension between them, yes, but not contradiction. One does not have to choose between them." This dissertation will not be using Browning's three definitions, but use it only to emphasise how definitions in the field of faith formation function on many different levels at the same time.

### 1.3.1 Faith formation: Processes whereby Christian learning takes place

In the United States "Christian Education" has historically been a Protestant term. For some<sup>14</sup> it has negative connotations and undertones of indoctrination and triumphalism. "Primarily, however, it denotes the formative (usually including the evangelistic) activities of the church in developing Christian beliefs, attitudes and overt behaviors" (Astley 1994:7). In Britain this is called "Christian education" and "Christian nurture", while the Catholics prefer to describe this activity as "catechesis". The more popular and ecumenical term is "religious education". For the British this last term specifies a general nonconfessional educational activity, usually treated as part of schooling that educates children about religion. They use "Christian education" as the term for the confessional

---

<sup>14</sup> Please see Groome (1980:24) and Lee (1971:6).

activity of teaching the Christian religion. Groome (1980:9), uses the somewhat cumbersome term "Christian religious education". With this term he tries to avoid any hint of Christian empire building and colonial dominance of religious education.

This study adopts a fairly broad notion of Christian religious education and Christian learning. It does not want to restrict education in the church to what is traditionally called "catechesis" in the Dutch Reformed Church. Therefore the term "*faith formation*" is used. Arguments for and against my use of this phrase will surface shortly.

This study will define *faith formation* as the process whereby Christian learning takes place. Faith formation has a very broad definition, but we need some terms to refer to those processes in the faith community by which people become Christian and come to be more Christian. It has to do with the structures and patterns a community maintains in living together. Others will prefer to speak of "Christian nurture", "Christian religious education" or "catechesis."

What this study calls faith formation, is what Osmer (1990:19) calls "education". For him, faith formation "... is a long-term learning process which takes place on a formal and informal level. It is what happens unintentionally in a congregation through symbols, culture and patterns of interaction between the members. Formation presupposes interaction on many different levels. Not just what happens in structured situations have the formation of faith as a result." Faith formation is thus more than teaching, although it often involves teaching.

### **1.3.2 Teaching: intentional facilitation and learning**

Teaching is understood as the intentional facilitation (promotion, enabling, aiding) thus teaching a person to be Christian. It is the adoption and deepening of one's Christian beliefs, attitudes, values, and dispositions to act in a Christian way and experience life in a Christian way<sup>15</sup>. At the heart teaching stands for the "increase in understanding<sup>16</sup> of the subject matter on the part of the student". It focuses on specific occasions, involves particular people, and happens in a specific setting. "It is an event, not an ongoing process or structure" (Osmer 1990:21). It focuses on specific educational structures and processes that try to foster learning and understanding.

---

<sup>15</sup> This is what Astley (1994:9) calls "*Christian learning*".

<sup>16</sup> *Understanding* should be considered broader than what is normally the case in an intellectual sense. It is the "integration of internal and external experience into cognitive processes and content in a manner affording understanding" (Osmer 1990:21).

Astley (1994:35) writes: "People learn all the time, through a variety of 'learning experiences'; but they are 'taught' only when the learning is brought about or facilitated in some way by a teacher, who to some extent is influencing their learning experience." Learning is thus an "achievement" of the learner, whereas teaching is the "task" of the teacher. Teaching is the intentional facilitating of learning<sup>17</sup>.

### **1.3.3 Indoctrination: fixed, unquestionable and closed learning outcomes**

Astley (1994:44-77), has an important discussion on the distinction between indoctrination and rational education. He states that the distinction is much less clear-cut than is often supposed. In many contexts indoctrination is a prerogative term and a large amount of literature focuses on attempts to define the specific criteria of indoctrination. Astley discusses four different criteria; *the method-criterion* (controversial educational methods for the uncritical implantation of beliefs), *the content-criterion* (a systematic attempt to pass on as true a set of beliefs which are basically unfounded), *the intention-criterion* (when the teacher actively desires that the pupils should believe what he is teaching regardless of the evidence) and *the consequences-criterion* (when the beliefs, attitudes, values, and so on which are taught are held in such a way that they are no longer open to full rational assessment).

What then is indoctrination? It is the "production of fixed, unquestionable, closed learning outcomes" (Astley 1994:49). It is when the formation of a people has been replaced by the persuasion of individuals (Dawn 1995:139). In contrast, faith formation increases the student's ability to comprehend meaning, and encourages selfrespect.

### **1.3.4 Method: systematic approach for reaching educational goals**

Method is part of teaching. It is "a systematic approach for reaching a goal or doing inquiry into an area of study". It includes techniques, which "are particular practices that people use to carry out a method" (Moore, 1991:20).

Methods are not usually a matter of concern in theology. Theologians often concern themselves first with clarifying the subject matter (content), assuming that methodology will naturally follow. When the subject matter is clarified, methodology<sup>18</sup> is seen as

---

<sup>17</sup> For a list of tested and useful principles of teaching/learning, please see Esther Megill's book, *Education in the African Church* (1976: 7-13).

<sup>18</sup> Methodology "is theoretical reflection on method, the means by which we seek wisdom about method. Methodology involves analyzing, evaluating, and theorizing about method in order to



secondary. This study's position is quite different. The assumption here is that methodological considerations come before, during and after the identification of subject matter. In fact, what subject matter we choose is actually shaped by our method and by our theory about method.

### **1.3.5 Christian learning: all the time and everywhere**

Psychologists define learning as "a lasting change in a person brought about by experience" (rather than by growth and maturation, or by development through exercise). According to their broad definition, people learn knowledge, skills and attitudes (Astley 1994:34).

Therefore *Christian learning* is a very widespread activity. Astley (1994:11) prefers this term and claims that "it is something that is taking place all the time and everywhere. Where-ever, whenever and however people become more Christian as a result of their experiences, there they are learning Christianity. Christians learn to be Christians *both* through and in worship, spirituality, ministry and fellowship of the church, and through *and* in many and various other, apparently more 'secular', activities." For him Christian life is learned in overtly Christian contexts and in contexts that carry no Christian labels. This definition is too broad for this study. It is true that we change all the time and "some of these changes are changes in the direction of becoming in some sense more Christian" (Astley 1994:10), but this is a very widespread activity (Warren 1989:3-5).

This is something much broader than educators can control. But faith formation is part of the church's responsibility; and Christians must be willing to recognise and exercise this responsibility wherever and whenever they can.

### **1.3.6 Christian education: intentional, systematic, planned processes**

On the other hand faith formation is broader than Christian education. It is not just the intentional, deliberate, systematic, structured, sustained, long-term, planned processes such as Adult Christian discussions and Bible study groups or catechism classes. Faith formation is not always as obvious and explicit as education in the faith community (see also Dingemans 1986: 13). It also includes less obvious educational activities, such as worship, church outings, church council meetings, giving-campaigns and deliberately planned experiences in nature on a country walk, in hospital or during conversations.

---

make decisions concerning which methods to use and how to shape and reshape them" (Moore, 1991:21).

“Education is a community’s systematic and intentional<sup>19</sup> effort to transmit and evoke knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills that are deemed worthwhile. ...[I]t involves *intentionality* in designing structures and processes by which learning takes place. Such intentionality extends through time; hence, it is *systematic*. ... The selectivity and normativity inherent in such a curriculum inevitably mean that education is involved in a political process in which different interpretations of the normative beliefs and practices of a community compete for power.”

Education is defined as programmes and events where the congregation deliberately try to teach people faith. This could include catechesis, Bible studies, retreats, workshops, youth work, choirs, service groups, prayer groups, Bible school, new member classes, and family programmes. It is intentional. It has a purpose, a conscious decision, and specific behaviour as outcome. This makes evaluation possible.

Education involves administration, the publication of resources and research. But teaching remains the central goal. There is even more perspectives underlying educational decisions. What then are the educational perspectives underlying faith-formation in the church today?<sup>20</sup> They have to do with:

- The **goal** of faith formation - how does one genuinely form "mature" Christians with "lived Christian faith"? (Richards 1981:300 and Groome 1991:18) How do we form members of the congregation spiritually?
- The **curriculum** of faith formation in a congregation - how to integrate the "theoretical" and the "practical" sides of a curriculum, or how to overcome the fragmentation of the curriculum.
- The adequacy of the faith formation process for its social and cultural **context** - how to make it adequate for the pluralism of its immediate and worldwide settings, or how to "Africanise" it, or how to make it "specific for a congregation".
- The **human resources** of faith formation - how to find appropriately prepared leaders and how to cope with a lack of involvement by parents and an unwillingness by people to attend "classes".
- The **financial resources** of faith formation - how to be most effective with the shrinking church and (in African Churches) often no resources and facilities.

---

<sup>19</sup> The terms 'systematic' and 'intentional' distinguish education from socialisation or enculturation.

<sup>20</sup> I have used the list Kelsey (1992:24) uses to describe the problems in theological schooling.

- The **governance** of faith formation - how to provide leadership most effectively in the congregation, or how to integrate faith formation and "other" congregational activities.

### **1.3.7 Faith formation revisited: Nurturing/traditioning and critical reinterpretation**

Faith formation is more restricted than Christian learning but broader than Christian education. It enfolds teaching and evangelism but is not indoctrination. Formation assumes its inevitable importance precisely "in the face of the powerful formative structures found in wider social and cultural life" (Warren 1989:23).

The word formation in faith formation brings to mind Astley's (1994: 78-197) distinctions between *Formative education* and *Critical education*<sup>21</sup>. Here it is sufficient to say that formative education, as expanded by Astley (1994:85), is more or less what this study has in mind with faith formation. For him formative education is or should be "whole person education... [it] forms not only cognitions in the learner, but also attitudes, dispositions, values, emotions and lifestyle as both products and processes. It does this in a receptive, uncritical way. In Christian religious education these learning outcomes include the formed affections and dispositions to overt behavior of the Christian, which many would regard as the most important Christian learning outcomes." But he hastens to add that all formative education should have at least some elements of critical education (engaging the learner in evaluative thinking).

Furthermore, it should be noted that the term faith formation is used in a way broad enough to encompass evangelism as well as Christian nurture. It means both preaching the gospel with the aim of conversion (evangelisation) as well as teaching the faith to form the converts (catechesis)<sup>22</sup>.

The definition of faith formation in this study, however, does not include the following terms:

*Teaching about religion:* The non-confessional study of beliefs, values and practices of one or other religion. This is non-evangelistic and non-nurturing teaching that often bears the title "religious studies" in schools and universities.

---

<sup>21</sup> This is discussed in greater detail in sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2.

<sup>22</sup> "These two terms are increasingly regarded as having overlapping references. They are distinct in audience, content, methods and learning outcomes only in degree and not in kind. The traditional distinction is often drawn on the basis of a restricted normative definition of education" (Astley 1994:13).

*A Christian critique of education:* This is the development of an understanding of education that is developed with conscious reference to the Christian viewpoint as critique on other accounts of education and educational activities.

*General education of a Christian kind:* This phrase denotes general educational activities that are not directly focused on Christianity, but which are influenced by a Christian understanding of education.

It should be clear by now that this study understands the phrase faith formation as:

the processes and means whereby  
Christians (that is to say, not only children) as individuals and groups  
form each other over their life-span  
in the nurturing and formation of a Christian worldview, character and identity (that is  
*traditioning*), and  
the development of critical, evaluative and analytical skills to *reinterpret* the Christian  
culture and self-understanding into which they have been traditioned.

Faith formation thus has to do with formation *and* transformation. Without formation faith formation has no confessional foundation. Without transformation faith formation do not have the power to adapt and witness in a new context.

Faith formation is: *transmitting and reinterpreting faith for the traditioning and the transforming of the faith community.*

This means that faith formation is more intentional than socialisational (unintentional, unconscious processes), without seeking blind obedience and conformity (indoctrination).

It may be said that faith formation so defined is expanded out of all proportion. As Astley (1996:11) remarks: "Just as some would say that liturgists try to make everything in the church into worship, and counselors make it all therapy, so it would seem that educationists want everything to be education. ...Yet it has to be admitted that there are some categories of human activity that is difficult not to see everywhere, and learning is one of them. ...We may agree that Christian education is not everything in the church; but it is, or should be, an aspect of everything that happens in the church."

#### **1.4 Practical theological perspectives: from practice to theory and back again**

At this point it is appropriate to mention practical theological perspectives underlying the theory of faith formation. Within the broader practical theological debate this study is based on a “*practice to theory to practice*” assumption. This will be explained by referring, though very cursory, to Don Browning’s theory. On a South African level, this writer follows the thoughts of Coenie Burger on practical theology. His theory will also be mentioned.

In his book “A Fundamental Practical Theology” (1991), Don S. Browning moves beyond the tradition of organising theological disciplines as theory and practice, typical of systematic theology. He makes claims about the nature of practical theology, and about the nature of theology as a whole. In following the two Niebuhrs, Tillich, Moltmann, Metz, Segundo, Gutiérrez, Bonino, Groome, Farley, Fowler, Poling, Miller, Mudge, and many others, he broadens and redefines what used to be called practical theology - the church disciplines of preaching, worship, pastoral care, and religious education.

Systematic theology shows how modernity and liberalism unwittingly made the religious community’s tradition problematic. Practical theologians are then assigned the impossible task of mediating between this problematic tradition and modernity. Religious leaders are given the task of discerning the truth in the face of a presumed intellectually unstable community tradition.

Browning however proposes a new organisation of the theological disciplines and practices. He draws on the rebirth of practical wisdom and argues that this communal tradition exhibits both memory and wisdom. Theology, then, needs to be structured not as theory-practice but as *practice-theory-practice*.

In this way theology is practical to its core. He believes “that viewing theology as a practical discipline through and through leads to discoveries that will benefit theology, the church, and theological education” (Browning 1991: ix). He builds on the re-emergence of practical philosophies with their fascination with terms such as *practical reason, practical wisdom, practice, praxis, justice, and communication*. “This fascination suggests that Western societies are desperate to find ways to make shared and workable decisions about the common good and the common life” (Browning 1991:4).

According to Browning, we are in a period of social reconstruction, working for maintenance of shared traditions, social narratives, and communal identities. For him, religious communities are the carriers of practical wisdom. In this model communal wisdom first needs to be discerned by the community in conversation. The theological task

then begins with theory-laden questions, most often raised when a crisis arises. The community is finally sent back to its sacred texts or normative sources to formulate responses.

As said earlier, Browning proposes a different model for theology. His view, in contrast to the Barthian view, shifts from practice to theory and back to practice. "Or more accurately, it goes from present theory-laden practice to a retrieval of normative theory-laden practices." Barth, in contrast, was an epistemological realist. He believed that the interpreting community should empty itself of its usual attempts to verify things morally, experientially, or cognitively. The believing community should conform itself totally to the Word of God revealed in Scripture. This, Browning believes, is a classic expression of the theory-to-practice model of theology. "Such a model dominated most theological education in both Europe and North America in the middle decades of the twentieth century" (Browning 1991:7). It also affected the thought and life of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Browning (1991:44), prefers a "critical correlational approach" to fundamental practical theology. Through this he connects the confessional approach (which sees theology primarily as witnessing to the narrative structure of the faith) and the apologetic approach (which defends the rationality of the faith and tries to increase its plausibility to the contemporary secular mind). In following David Tracy, Browning (1991:46), believes that Christian theology must become "a critical dialogue between the implicit questions and the explicit answers of the Christian classics and the explicit questions and the implicit answers of contemporary cultural experience and practices".

According to Browning, a fundamental practical theology (his name for the larger and more encompassing discipline of Christian theology) is the mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian faith with the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation (Browning 1991:47).

This critical correlational approach employs four sub-movements: *descriptive*, *historical*, *systematic-ethical*, and *strategic practical theologies*.

<b>Descriptive theology</b>	It describes the contemporary theory-laden practices which give rise to the practical questions that generate all theological reflection. This is a multidimensional hermeneutic enterprise or dialogue.
<b>Historical theology</b>	It asks, "What do the normative texts that are already part of our effective history really imply for our praxis when they are confronted as honestly as possible?" This is where the traditional disciplines of biblical studies, church history, and the history of Christian thought are located.
<b>Systematic-ethical theology</b>	It is the fusion of horizons between the vision implicit in contemporary practices and the vision implied in the practices of the normative Christian texts. It is fusion between the present and the past.
<b>Strategic practical theology</b>	It establishes the norms and strategies of concrete practices in the light of analysis of concrete situations. This term refers to what is commonly understood as the church discipline of religious education, pastoral care, preaching, liturgy, social ministry, and so forth.

Once we grasp the practice-theory-practice structure of all theology, "the gulf disappears between our high-level theological texts and discourses and the practical activity of religious education, care, preaching, and worship" (Browning 1991:9).

The same sort of practical-theological perspectives are held by local theologians, namely C.W. Burger and J. Müller. Burger (1991:88) is convinced that practical theology necessitates two reflective processes that run simultaneously. These two processes can not be separated and are both part of the one field of practical theology. They are interactive and are focused on each other.

The first process formulates from the Word, a theological vision for the church. In this all the "different" disciplines of Theology should work together. The second process tries to look empirically at the current situation. This is an in-depth analysis of the current situation in the church. As these are no separate processes for Burger one can also discern the practice-theory-practice structure in his practical theology.

Müller (1996: 1-3) describes his own practical theology as an integrated, circular model of moving forward and backward between practice and theory. He links up with Aristotle, Gadamer and Browning in his choice for an interaction between experience of the practice and knowledge of theories. He chooses openly for a practice-theory-practice movement in his scientific process.

This study is written from the perspective that Christian religious education, like “practical theology”, is most creative if it grasps the practice-theory-practice structure of *all* theology.



## **2. Between rationalism and experiential knowledge: Epistemology revisioned.**

Chapters 2 and 3 will discuss the two main questions in the historic debate on the formation of faith:

- a) The epistemological question: How do we come to reliable knowledge?
- b) The sociological question: What is the formative influence of our social context?

The study will then examine the theological understanding of the teaching ministry of the church as it is found in the thoughts of Martin Luther and John Calvin. A constructive proposal for the formation of faith will follow.

This chapter begins with an overview of Thomas H. Groome's thoughts on the purpose of Christian religious education in his book, *Sharing Faith*. Groome wrote (1991:3) "for people who intend to educate others in Christian faith - to be religious in a Christian way". The following pages will show that he sees *wisdom* as the purpose of Christian religious education

The second part of Chapter 2 will discuss the various historical positions in the epistemology. It will not discuss the whole debate in historical detail. It will show the two opposing sides in the debate and important conclusions will be drawn. These conclusions will help to draw the boundaries for a theory on faith formation later in the study.

The review of the main schools of epistemology will give us three important guidelines about faith formation:

- a) The importance of active remembrance of tradition.
- b) The importance of engaging people as agent-subjects-in-relationship.
- c) The importance of mystery, art and poetry.

Reviewing the main schools in the epistemological debate will help to develop a comprehensive theory of faith formation. Chapter 3 will review the whole sociological question and broaden the philosophical foundations of Christian religious education "beyond epistemology and people's way of 'knowing' to embrace ontology and people's whole way of 'being' as human beings in the world" (1991:7). These two chapters will help to promote a holistic learning outcome, which is the purpose of faith formation.

## **2.1 The purpose of Christian religious education: wisdom**

Groome (1991:8) describes the nature and purposes of Christian religious education as follows: "... that we promote personal cognition as a reflective, dialectical, and dialogical process that encourages a right relationship between knower and known in a community of discourse and that we broaden our concern beyond simply cognition." He sees our basic philosophical foundation as ontological, namely, the shaping of people's ontic selves, rather than simply epistemological. The learning outcome of Christian religious education should be more than what the Western world typically indicates as "knowledge."

Under "ontology" he understands "the being of ourselves as we exist in an agential relationship with historical reality". An ontological term would encourage educators to engage and inform, form, and transform the very 'being' of people in the world.

"Epistemic" attends to "the consciousness that arises from the whole 'being' as agent-subject-in-relationship"<sup>23</sup>. Participants are to be engaged, formed, and empowered by religious education.

Looking for a more holistic learning outcome, the incarnational principle of Christianity demands a pedagogy that is grounded and shapes people's ontic selves.

For Groome (1991:11), all religious education has three constitutive characteristics:

- a. Religious education is a transcendent activity. Religious education "attempts to nurture to awareness and lived expression the human capacity for the transcendent".
- b. Through the above mentioned, religious education "attends to, engages, and shapes people's whole way of 'being'- a profound ontological activity". We are to educate *people*, be "deeply human". "The 'subjects' teachers teach, are *people*, not the 'things' about which we teach." (Groome 1991:11)
- c. All religious education is a 'political' activity. With political Groome (1991:13) means "the art of enabling the shared life of citizens". Education must shape how people "live their lives together in both the public and private realms". "Nothing is more politically significant than shaping the ultimate myths of meaning and ethic by which people live their lives."

---

<sup>23</sup> The participants are subjects that ought to be "consciously aware, reflective, discerning, and responsible people." Groome (1991:8), use the term "subject" to signify the "intrinsic value of persons qua persons". He uses "in-relationship" to indicate "that the authentic 'being' of people is always realized 'in relationship' with others in time and place" (9).

Jesus said that we will love God *by* loving our neighbour as ourselves. As statement it is totally political in its intent and consequences. Furthermore we must "choose processes and create environments in which people are actively engaged as participating subjects in events and communities marked by relationships of inclusion and mutuality..." (Groome 1991:13). In such communities there can be dialogue, critical and creative evaluation of reality, reflection of handed-down-truths and responsible decision making.

Groome wants to encourage educators to engage, inform, form and transform the very "being" (Human being (noun) and act of be-ing (verb)) of people in the world. For him, "our aim is not simply that people know about justice, but that they be just." What would he then consider to be the purpose of Christian religious education?

### **2.1.1 The metapurpose: education for the Reign of God<sup>24</sup>**

The *metapurpose* of Christian religious education is the "reign of God". It must promote God's rule in people's lives. Under "kingdom" Groome understands "an act of reigning rather than ... a particular realm or domain" (Groome 1991:14). He describes the metapurpose for the praxis of Christian education under ten headings:

1. The reign of God is a symbol of God's sovereignty over all creation. God is the only God who is to reign in people's lives.
2. The reign of God evokes God's intentions for and God's activity in history.
3. The Kingdom of God is a gift that comes by the grace and power of God. God has also called humankind into the covenant which requires us to live toward the realisation of God's reign.
4. The Kingdom can be spoken of as "already begun", as "coming now", and as "not yet" fulfilled.
5. The reign of God was incarnated in Jesus, the Christ.
6. Jesus' whole life purpose was that God's will should be done now and that all people should be brought to wholeness and the creation to completion.
7. The disciples are in a covenantal partnership with God and one another, with responsibility to bring forth its fruits. It is a symbol of both hope and command, promise and responsibility.
8. It has a personal and interpersonal meaning for us.

---

<sup>24</sup>It is important to recognise that Thomas Groome does not share the same reservations about the phrase *reign of God* as people who write from the Reformed tradition (for example, McFague), because his Roman Catholic roots have never emphasised the sovereignty of God to the exclusion of human agency.

9. In the social/political realm it means that faith communities should be a "public church."
  10. God's reign will come to completion at the end time.
- "God's reign as the metapurpose of Christian religious education highlights the enterprise as an ontological one, demanding pedagogy that engages and forms people's very selves to be historical agents of God's reign." (Groome 1991:17)

### **2.1.2 The first existential purpose: education for Lived Christian Faith**

If the reign of God is the "final" purpose of Christian religious education, what then is the immediate existential purpose? Groome (1991:18), sees the promotion of lived Christian faith as the "formal" purpose, namely, "what it is to 'form' in people's lives". Interest in Christian religious education must be realised in people's lives, "the Christian community must make accessible and nurture people in the specificity of its faith tradition" (Groome 1991:18). "[L]ived Christian faith is the action of agent-subjects who through an independent community of Christian faith engage in a threefold dynamic of historical activities: believing, trusting, and doing God's will."

1. "There is a cognitive/mental dimension to Christian faith; it is a believing activity that reflects conviction and decision." (Groome 1991:18-20)
2. "There is an affective/relational dimension to Christian faith; it is a trusting in one's relationship with God in Jesus that is nurtured and realized in relationship with a Christian community and that shapes one's relationship with all humankind." (Groome 1991:20)
3. "There is a behavioral/obediential dimension to Christian faith; it is an activity of 'doing God's will' in the world." (Groome 1991:20-21)

A holistic understanding of lived Christian faith "pertains to people's whole way of being in the world. Realized Christian faith is an ontic affair from which no dimension or dynamic of our 'being' can be excluded." Groome quotes Tillich who said, "... faith ... is an act of the total personality". He then describes the history of Western religious education as "... marked by the assumption that there is a direct correlation between religious knowledge and lived faith, that to impart 'knowledge about' is adequate to promote Christian identity and agency; we must transcend this partial assumption. Religious education for lived Christian faith is an ontological enterprise that is to inform, form, and transform people in heads, hearts, and life-styles; ...together" (Groome 1991:21).

### **2.1.3 The second existential purpose: education for wholeness of human freedom**

What was true for young people in 1964 (Babin 1964:87), is still true today for all people "... they must have before their eyes the living evidence that they can serve God without

turning their back on life. They need to see concrete instances of men and women who are fully human as well as fully Christian."

Groome (1991:22), proposes freedom "...as the most adequate [term] ... in our time for talking about the historical consequences and responsibilities for Jesus' disciples of his life, death, and resurrection". "In Christian faith, Jesus sets people free *from* sin, personal and social, calls them to struggle *against* the consequences of sinful choices and structures, to be free *for* living in right relationship with God, self, others, and creation and free *to* create structural arrangements that enable others to so live." (Groome 1991:24)

This freedom is evident on all levels of our existence. There is *personal* freedom that "...heals our inner brokenness, assures us of God's never-ending mercy, and sets us free to truly love ourselves, and God". The freedom is also for *interpersonal* relationships. It is a freedom "...to say yes to the neighbor with love that does justice and create liberated zones of right relationship". It is a *sociopolitical* freedom that "...empowers us to refute the deadening power of sinful social structures and to create political arrangements that promote fullness of life for all people and ...(creation)" (Groome 1991:24) .

"Freedom as an existential purpose of Christian religious education also has pedagogical advantages; it lends to it a language that is engaging, consciousness-raising, and praxis oriented. It is engaging language for our time, when issues of justice and liberation have taken on an urgency..." "It is consciousness-raising in that it prompts people to think socially as well as personal, historically as well as 'eternally,' about the effects of sin and the import of Jesus. It is praxis oriented in that it prompts people to take on the historical responsibilities of Christian faith." (Groome 1991:25)

#### **2.1.4 Education for wisdom in Christian faith**

For words which will describe the purpose of Christian religious education, Groome chooses "*conation*" (wisdom) and "*remembrance of being*" as words that encompasses all the above.

If the purpose of Christian religious education is to be an ontological enterprise, it only highlights the "nurturing function" of the Christian community. To form people's ontic selves "...Christian faith identity and agency needs a vibrant Christian faith community." Groome (1991:26), explains further: "...the more Christian religious education can form a Christian community within the environment of its teaching/learning events, and the more faith filled is the community that surrounds its participants and sponsors the enterprise, the more likely will be their education in Christian identity and agency."

What then is the intended learning outcome of Christian religious education?

#### **2.1.4.1 Wisdom or "conation"**

Groome's approach to shared Christian praxis is "far more than cognitivist". He uses the word *conation* as the learning outcome of Christian religious education because it reflects "the holistic intent of a knowing/desiring/doing that engages the whole 'being' of people as agent-subjects in the world" (Groome 1991:26). He proposes *wisdom* as a synonym for *conation* because *wisdom* is a word with a rich biblical tradition.

"In gist, then, the exercise of this foundational eros for actualized, meaningful, responsible, and relational human 'being' can be called 'conative activity,' and the ongoing realization of such activity can be called 'conation.' Thus, conative activity engages people's corporeal, mental, and volitional capacities, their heads, hearts, and overt behaviors, their cognition, desire, and will as they realize their own 'being' in right relationship with others and the world and contribute in ways that are life-giving for all. [C]onation, then, emerges and is realized as the whole ontic 'being' of agent-subject actively engaged in partnership with others to consciously know, desire, choose, and responsibly do what is most humanizing and life-giving for all." (Groome 1991:30)

Therefore the pedagogical task for Christian conation is "being and becoming Christian". In the Christian tradition the word 'wisdom' is used to describe this "unity of knowing, loving, and serving God by knowing, loving, and serving one's neighbor as oneself ...". Wisdom must not be overshadowed by the obsession of our Western tradition for rational certainty. Wisdom, as synonym for conation, can be used "...to refer to a holistic human activity that includes cognition, affection, and volition and engages and shapes people's whole 'being' in ways that are historically responsible and life-giving for self and others. Wisdom pertains to one's identity and agency, it is realized in one's very 'being'. Such wisdom arises from reflection on one's own life, from dialogue and the example of other 'wise' people, and from reflection on God's wisdom as revealed through Scripture and tradition; it requires the context of dialogue and testing of a 'wisdom community'. Pedagogically Christian wisdom presents the task of informing, forming, and transforming people in the character of Christian faith. And the truly wise are those who so live." (Groome 1991:32)

#### **2.1.4.2 Remembrance of being**

Groome (1991:32-35) uses "remembrance of being" as operative criterion for evaluating the adequacy of traditional epistemological positions. How does he understand these guidelines?

1. He uses 'being' "to refer to the being of ourselves, to how human beings *are*". He wants to turn to "the consciousness of our own 'being' as historical agent-subjects-in-relationship".
2. "Being includes its meaning as a verb - as in 'be-ing.'" It involves all our acts of 'being'. This being is relational and thus "being toward" and "being with".
3. Being is also a noun and refers to "the identity we have and our inherent existential structures as humans". It is the ultimate ground for the 'ontic essence' of our 'being' in God, in whose image and likeness we are created and in whose Being our 'being' shares.
4. By "remembrance" he means the activity of consciously bringing to "mind" for understanding, judging, and decisions. This is in contrast to "forgetfulness of being"<sup>25</sup>. For people to remember is "to be aware of who they are and what they do in time and place."
5. "Remembering" also means "Re-membering." It calls us to recognise that our "being" is shaped by membership in time and place.

"In summary then, to be marked by 'remembrance of being',

a way of 'knowing' and/or a pedagogy must

a) engage the whole 'being' of participants as agent-subjects-in-relationship,

b) enable them to bring to mind the consciousness that arises from their 'being' with others in the world and

c) to discern how they are shaped by and

are to be responsible shapers of

their place and time together"(Groome 1991:34).

"Remembrance of being" is actually a commonsense criterion. "Whenever we find epistemological positions that exclude some aspect of human 'being' from the process of knowing, we will recognise "a forgetfulness of being" and something unlikely to contribute to pedagogy for conation." (Groome 1991:35)

## **2.2 Epistemology re-visioned: a historic search for wisdom**

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that inquires about "the nature, source, and reliability of knowledge" (Groome 1991:36). Groome indicates some patterns in Western philosophy in the answers given to the question: How do we come to knowledge? He shows these patterns by reviewing some of the primary architects of the epistemological

---

<sup>25</sup> The activity of which Heidegger accused Western philosophy.

foundations on which Christian religious education and, indeed, all Western education functions.

The next few pages will give an overview of Groome's review of a few great architects of the epistemological debate. It is beyond the scope of this study to pursue all the aspects and the entire history of the debate. At the end of the chapter the primary patterns in the epistemological debate will be systematised for the purpose of faith formation.

Groome shows that throughout history those who argued for reliable knowledge were divided on what they regarded as the source. The one group emphasised the role and *reliability of reason* and the other, the role of *sensory experience*<sup>26</sup>. Thus two broad schools of epistemology emerged: rationalism and empiricism.

<b>Rationalism</b>		<b>Empiricism</b>
<i>The intellect as origin and form of reliable knowledge</i>		<i>Experience is the first source of true ideas</i>

*Rationalism* situates reliable knowledge in the intellect. "By reasoned intuition, some first principles can be recognized. By rational deduction and logical analysis from those foundational propositions, other ideas follow in a descending hierarchy of truths" (Groome 1991:37). Therefore, true ideas thus come from our reason alone.

*Empiricism* claims that experience is the true source of ideas. For empiricists thought begins with experience and "nothing is ever in the mind that was not first in the senses" (Aquinas quoting Aristotle in Groome 1991:37).

While discussing the debate, Groome shows that three persistent features may be distinguished in the epistemological tradition.

1. *The founders of Western epistemology overreacted in their quest for rational certainty.* Thus they limited knowledge to ideas, and truth to rational certainty. This truth that was not "faithfulness to the perceived good" forged a "forgetfulness of being" from the start.

---

<sup>26</sup> This broad distinction is used by Newbigin (1989:2): "This humanist tradition is itself composed of many elements which can be grouped into two main strands. There is the *rationalist tradition*, drawing especially on Greek and Stoic sources, which affirms human reason as the organ through which alone truth may be known; and there is the *spiritualist tradition*, drawing on still more ancient sources which Europe shares with India, the tradition which affirms the capacity of the human spirit to make direct contact through mystical experience with the ultimate source of being and truth."



2. This encouraged a dichotomy between knowing and "being", theory and praxis, mind and will. Thus they failed to maintain a dialectical unity between life and thought.

3. Putting rational certain (reliable) ideas at the top of a hierarchy of knowledge encouraged an "androcentric ideology" (linking men and masculinity to the rational mind, and women and femininity to the irrational emotions). This excluded women from "real" knowing.

### **2.2.1 The great architects of the epistemological debate**

Let us now review the Western epistemological tradition. The first two Greek philosophers Groome discusses are Plato and Aristotle.

#### **2.2.1.1 Plato: Ideas over all**

Plato (c. 428-c.348 BC), said there were two kinds of reality: the changing, becoming, unreliable world of sensory objects in space and time and the unchanging world of ideas or eternal "forms". Through our bodies we come to knowledge of the first. But this is not reliable knowledge of the world of real and substantial "being". By reason, however, we come to certain knowledge of the most real world of forms (*eidos*). These are eternally true and unchanging ideas. "These forms represent the ideal of perfection that exist in a transcendent world, the eternal standards against which we humans measure our imperfect experiences of them in everyday life" (Groome 1991:39).

To understand Plato's process of reliable knowing it is best to imagine the world of things as a perpendicular line, divided into four parts from the bottom up. This represent four human efforts to know.

		OBJECTS	THOUGHT	
Intelligible unchanging world of reason	E	Highest forms (Ideals)	Reason (Intellectual intuition)	Reliable Knowledge
	D	Forms of science and mathematics	Understanding (Discursive reasoning)	
C <i>Line of demarcation between opinion and knowledge</i>				
Visible changing world of senses	B	Sense objects	Belief	Mere opinion
	A	Images	Conjecture	

The lower two parts (A and B) pertain to perception of the sensory world, and because they are body dependent, provide mere opinion. The most *sensoric* and thus the most untrustworthy experience in this group is that of the *imagination* (A). Therefore poetry, painting, sculpture, drama, and religious ritual are totally unreliable ways of knowing. On the second level (B) perception is also not a source of true knowledge.

There is a clear and qualitative dividing line (C) between the world of senses (A and B) and the world of reason (D and E). The two upper parts, drawing on the mind alone, provide reliable, certain knowledge of the form. "To come to knowledge people must leave the bodily world of senses and passions and cross over into the qualitatively different world of mind and its ability to reason by itself and within itself" (Groome 1991:39).

The first level of reliable knowledge is discursive reason (D), that draws images from the sensory world to understand *certain* mathematical and scientific ideas. The most certain knowledge comes from the intuition of pure reason (E). This reason can recognise (unaided by images or sense objects or discourse) the universal and unchanging truths of the intelligible world of forms. These forms and ideas are already in the mind or soul by transmigration from previous lives.

Groome (1991:41), remarks, "Plato's understanding of knowledge and knowing became the foundation for all the great rationalists and idealists after him. His legacy for Christian religious education is ambiguous; each of his possible assets for a conative (leading to

wisdom NWS) pedagogy has a corresponding and weightier liability. The assets reflect a 'remembrance of being' and the liabilities a 'forgetfulness.'" Groome names two:

	Asset: "remembrance of being"	Liability: "forgetfulness"
1	There is a reliable source and measure of truth beyond sense perception, that is not of our construction alone. We as Christians can claim no less.	This disparaging of the historical as a way of knowing, threatened the historicity of divine revelation. Did "the Truth" not become flesh in person?
2	Plato intuited that 'knowing', clear thinking and right ideas are to shape 'being' and draw us forward by desire.	However, his claim that knowing the ideals of goodness/justice will lead people to live accordingly, is false. He dismisses the role of praxis and imagination in forming people's wills in the habit of virtue.

### 2.2.1.2 Aristotle: Living "three lives"

Aristotle (384-322 BC), was a pupil of Plato for about twenty years. He never escaped Plato's influence, but rejected his theory of a separate world of ideal forms. For him forms did not exist apart from the matter of the visible things to which they gave form. "Consequently, knowledge begins with the study of nature, real things, everyday life, as presented by the senses and experience"<sup>27</sup> (Groome 1991:42).

Aristotle rejected Plato's notion that for reliable knowledge one should transcend sense experience. "Lived experience is a source of reliable knowledge for directing practical (*praxis*) and productive (*poiesis*) activities. Beyond that, theoretical or 'scientific' knowledge (*theoretikos episteme*) is stimulated by sense experience ..." (Groome 1991:42).

One moves from historical instances to universal ideas through induction and abstraction. Induction is the "imprint" that particular things induct into the mind and soul. Abstraction is the reverse process. Here the active intellect takes over from particular instances provided by the senses to abstract universal ideas.

"It seems that, for Aristotle, though the mind is stimulated by sense experience, rational intuition has its own source of knowledge beyond the instances of experience. [T]hough

---

<sup>27</sup> He did not limit knowledge to the experiential and practical and defended theoretical knowledge as a value and satisfaction of itself and not simply a means to practical or productive ends (as the Sophists of his time claimed).

he may not have abandoned it, Aristotle modified Plato's cognitive ladder by claiming that experience provides reliable knowledge for practical and productive activities and is stimulated, somehow, for theoretical knowledge as well" (Groome 1991:43).

Aristotle and Plato shared the conviction that "the best life is lived according to the highest virtue" (Groome 1991:43). He formulated three "ways of life" for people to live a good and happy life according to virtue. Every one is a mode of engaging intelligently and virtuously in the world: *theoria* (theoretical/scientific knowledge that is an end in itself), *praxis* (practical/political knowledge of how to live ethically in society), and *poiesis* (productive/creative knowledge of how to make things or art).

Groome declares that pedagogy for wisdom in Christian faith must engage and promote all of the above: critical reflection, ethical action and imaginative creativity. Therefore he dwells on Aristotle's "three lives" in detail:

	<b>theoria</b>	<b>poiesis</b>	<b>praxis</b>
	Theoretical/scientific knowledge that is an end in itself	Productive/creative knowledge of how to make things or art	Practical/political knowledge of how to live ethically in society
<b>Way of discovery</b>	Reflect on nonsensible realities and reason downward and upward	Artistic or skilled "making"	Engagement, rational reflection and responsible living in society
<b>Purpose</b>	An end in itself. Discovers scientific truths and divine wisdom (sophia)	Usually making concrete artifacts. This was the lowest and least reliable way of knowing.	The purpose of praxis is further praxis, not certain rational ideas. Making right judgments concerning ethical actions.
<b>Faculties of the soul</b>	Rational intuition (nous), the power of reason (episteme), and theoretical wisdom (sophia).	Art, skill or craft (techne)	Sensation, intellect and desire
<b>Christian religious education</b>	Critical reflection	Imaginative creativity	Ethical action

<b>What to reject</b>	His presumption that knowledge is ahistorical, dispassionate and disinterested.	His limiting it to labor that produces "things." It must rather include all creative, imaginative, and life-giving work of all humankind.	His separation of praxis from theoria and its relegation to an inferior social and cognitive status.
<b>What to retrieve</b>	His commitment to reason and logic	His recognition of poiesis as a virtuous life and a valid way of living.	His notion that praxis includes all reflective activities that engage the whole person.

Groome (1991:43), proposes that Aristotle's notion of praxis must subsume theoria and poiesis as foundation of pedagogy for wisdom. For Plato praxis is "conduct done reflectively and with historical purpose, or conversely, it is reflection and intentionality that is realized in human conduct. Aristotle's most frequent use of the term praxis was to describe reflective and purposeful human activity of any kind. ... When a person engages in sensation, practical reasoning, and right desire and acts on right choice, praxis is an expression and formative source of ... practical wisdom. ... A [wise] person, both knows and acts toward the 'right end' and with the 'right means' to achieve the greatest good. ... The [wise] person has both the ability and the disposition to apply rationally discerned and generally true principles to particular circumstances, to make the right practical judgment and to act accordingly" (Groome 1991:44-5). This would also be the purpose of faith formation.

Groome (1991:46-7), criticises Aristotle on two accounts, but also affirms him on two points:

Aristotle's *hierarchized* and *trichotomized* "three lives" must be rejected.

- 1) The first on the theological grounds that he understood God as a God of "thought" in contrast to the God of Hebrew and Christian Scripture. Here God is portrayed as a God of love and justice who is actively engaged in a covenant with all humanity.
- 2) The second must be rejected because it reflects a "forgetfulness of being" by disengaging the theoretical, practical, and poetic/productive activities in life.
- 3) On the other hand his affirmation of all three lives as valid ways of knowing, "begins to suggest the holistic engagement needed to promote ...wisdom".
- 4) Furthermore he included both the empirical and rational in the dynamic of "knowing".

Groome (1991:48), nevertheless finds in Aristotle's "three lives" the rudimentary activities that constitutes a "remembrance of being" and that are likely to promote wisdom in faith formation. He "believe[s]

educators are to engage, weave together, and hold all three activities in a symbiotic unity -

the theoretical/contemplative (theoria),

the practical/political (praxis),

and the creative/imaginative (poiesis).

When the three are reformulated and combined in a conative pedagogy of Christian faith, the "theoretical" dimension

is reflected in at least three ways:

a) by contemplative activity to discern God's self-disclosure in present reality;

b) by critical reasoning on people's own 'being' in time and place and on the meaning of the Christian faith for the present;

c) and by a narrative activity that goes beyond Aristotle's dehistoricized notion of theoria and makes accessible the practical wisdom from God's revelation to this community over a period of time - Christian "Story".

The pedagogy is 'practical' in that it arises from, engages in, and intends to shape people's 'being' in time and place, and thus has a dynamic suited to conation in Christian faith.

The 'creative' dimension is honoured by attending to people's historical visions and to the Vision of God's reign by enlivening their imaginations and empowering their wills to be co-creators of it now."

Up to this point we have referred to two historic schools in the epistemological debate and have discussed two Greek philosophers whom Groome places in each of these schools of thought:

<b>Rationalism</b>		<b>Empiricism</b>
<i>The intellect as origin and form of reliable knowledge</i>		<i>Experience is the first source of true ideas</i>
	<i>Greek philosophy</i>	
<b>Plato:</b> Ideas over all		<b>Aristotle:</b> Lived experience is source of knowledge for praxis and productive activities (poiesis)

Then he comments on the encounter between Greek philosophy and Christian faith by highlighting the epistemologies of Augustine and Aquinas. They have been selected because they are the great “Christianizers” of Plato and Aristotle, respectively, and two of the most influential architects of the educational praxis of the church.

### **2.2.1.3 Augustine: Truth already within**

Christianity began to emerge as the established religion in the Roman Empire with Constantine and the Edict of Milan (313). Augustine of Hippo (354-430) was the most influential in forming the thought patterns of “Christendom”.

Augustine tried to weave revelation and reason together to promote wisdom of Christian faith. Augustine was a “confessed” Neoplatonist who wished to develop faith beyond blind assent.

He followed Plato in asserting that the soul or mind is the only source of what qualifies as “knowledge” (Newbigin 1995:9). He also worked with a threefold schema of the capacities of the soul. He, however, did not claim that these were separate faculties - he saw them as symbiotic activities arising from the same soul. What was Augustine's understanding of each capacity within the process of knowing?

*Reason* is the mind either turned upwards to God or downwards to temporal or sensible things. The first is a superior form of reasoning or contemplation and leads to wisdom (*sapientia*), the second leads to knowledge (*Scientia*). This first way of knowing, which is independent of the senses, is a kind of spiritual insight or inner illumination, because it reflects the mind of God.

*Memory* is a great treasure chamber or storehouse, where we retain everything we know. This knowledge comes from Christ, “the teacher within”, and not from transmigration as Plato states.

*Will* moves memory and reason to perceive truth and to choose that which is good and true. The will chooses according to *caritas* (love), which leads to truth and goodness.

Again Groome point out that the influence of Augustine's epistemology on theology has three significant assets, and three serious liabilities.

#### **Assets**

1) He deals with a unity of reason, memory, and will. This balance was lost in Western epistemology, especially with Descartes's emphasis on reason alone.

2) He emphasises the importance of people's memories in the catechetical process. He indicates that people's stories are a source of wisdom, and he appreciates the revelatory capacity of personal remembrance.

3) His affirmation that "truth resides within" suggests that people should engage actively as agent subjects in knowing their faith. People are thus active participants rather than passive receptacles for "banking."

### **Liabilities**

1) Augustine deals with a hierarchical dualism between mind and body. "Among other consequences ... one must conclude that because the soul acts on the body, faith made reasonable may lead to praxis but historical praxis never deepens people's faith or understanding of it" (Groome 1991:54).

2) He limits the imaginative function of memory. "The imaginative and creative activities of poetry and art (poiesis) have no place, for Augustine, in coming into the right relationship with or contemplation of God" (Groome 1991:55).

3) His endeavor to unify faith and reason is an exclusive one. He excludes the body, the "bodily" women, and the common people.

Although Augustine followed Plato's line of thought, Aristotle was also being revived at the beginning of the second millennium.

#### ***2.2.1.4 Aquinas: First in the senses***

Thomas of Aquinas (c.1225-1274) used an eclectic approach in forming his philosophy, but his primary mentor was undoubtedly Aristotle. This was especially evident in Aquinas's understanding of knowledge and the dynamics of knowing. He was influenced by the Scholastic theology that emerged at the beginning of the second millennium with the rediscovery of Greek philosophy, especially that of Aristotle.

"Like Augustine, Aquinas saw faith as prior to religious understanding and knowledge; one believes in order to understand. ... Yet like Augustine, Aquinas was convinced that faith must seek understanding, that reason can confirm and compliment the truths of revelation" (Groome 1991:56). But in epistemology their paths split.

Aquinas "...insisted on the unity of soul/mind and body as constitutive of the person; they depend for their action on each other" (Groome 1991:56). Therefore the body is always an active participant in knowing, and sensual experience, rather than inner illumination (Plato/Augustine), the source of universal ideas. Aquinas's epistemology can be summarised as: "Nothing is ever in the mind that was not first in the senses" (Groome 1991:56).



For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, *all* knowledge begins with perception. He also refuses to draw a line of demarcation between experiential knowledge and universal ideas, between experience and reliable cognition. Furthermore, he is more successful than Aristotle in maintaining unity between theoretical and practical knowledge. He is also more appreciative of poesis than Aristotle.

What then was Aquinas's influence on (Roman Catholic) religious education? On the positive side Groome (1991:57) cites two points:

1) Aquinas is marked by a "remembrance of being" in the unity he proposes between soul and mind and body in the process of knowing. Likewise he maintains a unity between theoretical and practical reasoning. He is not a naive empiricist, and insists on the role of intellect in knowledge. This epistemology recognises a theological method of reflection on life experience in the light of Scripture and tradition.

2) For Aquinas "knowing" begins with *attention* to and *comprehension* of the data of experience. This is then understood and judged by the intellect. "What is truly 'known' by people as their own is not 'poured in' from outside ..." (Groome 1991:58).

The potential of Aquinas's philosophy for the educational ministry of the church, is much more than what the church embraced at the time and later. "Honoring people's experience in the world, their capacities for theoretical and practical reasoning, and the dynamics of the knowing process he intimated, never became operative in the church's catechetical ministry" (Groome 1991:58). The church chose a path of passivity in the teaching and towards exclusion of the people it taught. How did Aquinas influence this?

1) The fact that Aquinas associated faith with the intellect, rather than with the will, encouraged a very rationalised presentation of "the faith". He was entirely patriarchal in his understanding of the intellect, thus excluding women and all "common people".

2) Thomism shaped the later education ministry of the Catholic church. The Reformers rejected Scholastic rationalism and understood faith as "the gift of God's grace that moves the will to acts of trust in God who saves, rather than the mind to assent to doctrinal formulations. In religious education, however, Luther was the great popularizer of the catechism question-and-answer approach, and Calvin followed his example" (Groome 1991:58).

The church turned towards the modern era using a pedagogy far removed from faith formation. "The Thomist scheme puts asunder what Augustine had held together, and as a result of this, knowledge is separated from faith. There is a kind of knowledge for which one does not have to depend on faith, and there is another kind which is only available by

the exercise of faith. It does not need to be pointed out that this dichotomy has run deep in our culture to this day" (Newbigin 1995:18).

Augustine and Aquinas present the two main epistemological schools of thought as described by Groome. Although more refined, they can be illustrated as follows:

<b>Rationalism</b>		<b>Empiricism</b>
<i>The intellect as origin and form of reliable knowledge</i>		<i>Experience as the first source of true ideas</i>
	<i>Christian faith</i>	
<b>Augustine:</b> Truth already within (reason, memory and will). Unity of thought and action.		<b>Aquinas:</b> Nothing is ever in the mind that was not first in the senses.

#### **2.2.1.5 Descartes: A doubter, no doubt?**

The Renaissance created a deep confidence in the human ability to know - unaided by divine revelation and independent of any church authority. Human reason was discovered to be capable of knowing reality and directing the course of human affairs.

In the midst of this intellectual élan René Descartes (1596-1650), resolved to "find one sure foundation upon which to build a system of certain knowledge that would silence the sceptics forever" (Groome 1991:59). He searched for one certain idea, "an unshakable foundation" for all knowledge. He was looking for an Archimedean point, a *clear and distinct idea* of an *existing thing* to serve as the foundational axiom for a deductive system of certain knowledge.

Like all rationalists he turned to the mind and even more particularly to reason alone, specifically to his own mind. He separated mind (*res cogitans*) and body (*res extensa*) totally. He claimed that "reason can function in and of itself to provide clear and distinct ideas, even of existing things" (Groome 1991:60). He thus rejected everything that comes from everyday experience and from natural science, because it depended on our bodies for sensory data.

What then was his undoubtable truth? "I think, therefore I am" - his famous *Cogito, ergo sum*. "Because I'm thinking, I therefore must exist, and I cannot doubt that I do. ... I cannot doubt that I think. Because thinking requires a thinker. I have a clear and certain idea of something that exists" (Groome 1991:60, see also Newbigin 1995:21). This led Descartes to conclude that our very essence is to be "a thinking thing." He wrote: "I am,

then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks; that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect, or reason ... a thinking thing" (Groome 1991:61).

Descartes' rationalism and unqualified dualism between mind and body have had enormous influence on Western epistemology:

1) Through his influence, Western philosophy shifted to the individual subject as the agent and source of knowledge. His "turn to the subject as the agent of cognition affirms the role and responsibility of each person in their own knowing and knowledge" (Groome 1991:61).

2) He initiated the practice of critical reasoning in the process of knowing.

For Groome (1991:62) "Descartes's liabilities, however, far outweigh his assets". Groome lists three:

1) His epistemology had a greater "forgetfulness of being" than any philosopher before him. He reduced the mind to reason alone, and maintained a hierarchical dualism between mind and body. (See also Newbigin 1989:18 and 1995:22)

2) He equated knowledge with rational certainty. This excluded the "common sense" knowledge that people obtained from their historical praxis through Western education. "This encouraged the church to teach in a dogmatic and doctrinaire mode, excluding any sense that the praxis of people is an integral part of their curriculum. The church now more obviously presumed (a) that it has such rational certainty in its Scriptures and official teachings and (b) that "the faith" must be presented in a deductive mode and as rationally certain if the "common people" are to give it their commitment" (Groome 1991:62).

3) Rational thinking, for Descartes, was a rugged individualistic and nondialogical activity. He had no awareness of the influence of social context and psychological conditions on people's thinking. For him, the "intellect works in a dehistoricized vacuum, and thinkers can come to certain ideas in solitude, without bias or interest, independent of any community of discourse or need for dialogue" (Groome 1991:63). This is clearly historical naïveté and isolationism unsuited for faith formation.

4) Newbigin (1995:21) adds a fourth liability: Descartes built a structure of "indubitable knowledge" on the foundation of scepticism. "Doubt, not faith, was to be the path to knowledge."

#### ***2.2.1.6 Locke: What you see is ...***

The modern architects of empiricism were two great British philosophers, John Locke (1632-1704) from England, and David Hume (1711-1776) from Scotland. They were influenced by their English "empiricist" predecessor, Francis Bacon (1561-1626).

In the years following Descartes, an epistemology emerged that was convinced that reality is not something upon which we impose our innate ideas. This was a rejection of Descartes's rationalism. John Locke was a representative voice among the emerging empiricists.

Locke was convinced that rationalism had led us astray, and he set out to construct an adequate theory of knowledge. For him “...the data of experience is always the primary and efficient source of reliable knowledge. ... there are no ideas ‘born into us.’ Everything we know arises from reflection on sensible data, and the ‘mind’ with which we reflect is itself formed by previously lived experiences. At birth the mind is not a ‘closet’ filled with innate ideas but a ‘*tabula rasa*,’ or blank tablet (A phrase Locke borrowed from Aristotle)” (Groome 1991:64).

For Locke, all general ideas are abstracted from experiential data (as for Aristotle), but in the process of knowing, the mind is both shaped by and dependent on experience (a notion very unlike Aristotle's, and in total contrast to Descartes's). He insisted that children learn best when they are interested, and the best way to gain their interest is through play (Megill 1976:37).

The central insight of Empiricism, that personal sense-experience is constitutive of human knowledge and knowing and shapes our ontic selves, should be seriously considered in faith formation. “Experiential” education affirms that the incarnation is the core and the claim of Christian faith. It reminds us that we come to a personal knowledge of God through God's recognisable activity in creation and in our history and the history of the faith community.

Despite the positive affirmation, empiricism is marked by many ways of “forgetfulness of being”.

- 1) There is no recognition of the “knower” as an agent-subject. If this is true, there is no agency or freedom in our “being” and “becoming”.
- 2) It presumes “objectivity” and is unaware of the social influence and interest of gathering and interpreting data.
- 3) The question still remains: What do we do with the truths recognised and systematised by others around and before us? It is not clear how the tradition of Biblical revelation can be appropriated in an exclusively empirical process.
- 4) The empiricists understand experience as totally passive. It is something we simply “undergo”, and it overlooks our engagement as agent-subjects in this world.

Descartes and Locke are again two exponents of the two main streams of thought in epistemology:

<b>Rationalism</b>		<b>Empiricism</b>
<i>The intellect as origin and form of reliable knowledge</i>		<i>Experience as the first source of true ideas</i>
	<b>Modern rationalism</b>	
<b>Descartes:</b> Cogito, ergo sum, dualism		<b>John Locke:</b> Look at the facts.

### 2.2.1.7 Kant: Knowledge by construction

Immanuel Kant, a brilliant philosopher, was above all an epistemologist. The dynamics of knowing and the reliability of knowledge were his first concerns.

He believes we have one and the same reason “which was to be distinguished simply in its application” (Groome 1991:66). He claimed that we have three basic faculties of the mind which enable us to engage intelligently in the world:

<i>Intuition</i>	Which, in concert with imagination, enables us to make unified representations of sensibilia, have a <i>perception</i> of things.
<i>Understanding</i>	By which we grasp perceptions and turn them into <i>concepts</i> for understanding.
<i>Reason</i>	Which unifies concepts of understanding, judges them, and moves to universal ideas. It also has functions and ideas that arise from within itself.

Kant was convinced that “one dimension of scientific knowledge comes from experience and another dimension is contributed by the mind alone, independent and prior to experience” (Groome 1991:67). Through this he thought he had united and affirmed the basic truth of both empiricists and rationalists, thus finally erasing Plato’s line of demarcation. He argues:

“Theoretical reasoning begins with sense experience. Our senses intuitively provide *perceptions* of reality as the ‘raw material’ for the understanding mind to form into *concepts* and eventually into *ideas* and *scientific truths*. The mind, however, is an active and structuring agent in this knowing process. It has a priori ‘categories’ of thought, independent of experience, that make perception of experience possible in the first place and turn our perceptions into concepts for understanding and judgment. In other words, what we know is as much structured by the knower’s mind as it is shaped by the world

known. The interaction between the subject knowing and the object known is what Kant called the 'biology of thought' ” (Groome 1991:67).

In his mind Kant tried to keep the empiricists and rationalists together by saying: “There can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience”, (see also Newbiggin 1989:18) and then hastened to add, “but ... it does not follow that it all arises out of experience”. The world stimulates our senses, and by intuition we gather perceptions of things. Then our understanding forms these perceptions into concepts that are “thought”.

There are two stages in the process of shaping raw sensations into the final product of understood ideas:

- 1) Firstly, there is the coordination of sensations by the a priori<sup>28</sup> “intuitive forms” of space and time.
- 2) Secondly the a priori categories of thought take perceptions from experience and shape them into concepts of understanding.

In this transition from perceptions to conceptions, *imagination* plays a key mediating role:

perceptions	imagination	conceptions
space and time		thought categories of understanding

“Imagination, for Kant, possesses schemata or organizing capacities that take multiple stimuli from sense experience and form them into a unified image. His word for imagination, *einbildungskraft*, literally means “the power of shaping into one”; it is the capacity to bring unity among various perceptions. It is imagination that enables understanding to activate appropriate thought categories so that perceptions may emerge as concepts” (Groome 1991:68).

This, we shall see, links to *Gestalt* as a methodology for formation.

The problem was that this theoretical reasoning led only to ideas and scientific knowledge. This posed a dilemma: What then is the source of morality and belief in God? What knowledge shapes the ethics of human conduct and the practice of religion? For this Kant used the word “practical knowledge,” which is knowledge of moral conduct, of God, immortality, and freedom. These things, he claims, have no objects in the observable world of experience “but belongs in the supersensible or metaphysical realm, beyond the

---

<sup>28</sup> Kant thinks of “transcendental” categories that are a priori in the mind; they are formal structures of the mind itself.

reach of theoretical reason. ... In other words, Kant believes morality and religious faith are divorced from all experience, from all personal interest, from all consideration of circumstances in which we act morally and believe in God, immortality of the soul, of freedom. ... In a sense, we 'just know' such matters and existentially cannot say much more about their basis" (Groome 1991:70).

Although this was Kant's way of defending religion from what he perceived as the threat of rationalism, it turned out to be one of his major liabilities. Nothing could be more detrimental to faith formation than Kant's separation of theoretical reasoning from practical reasoning. In this he made the old dichotomies between theory and praxis, understanding and will, science and ethics worse. "After Kant, scientific knowing could more readily become technical rationality that only asks "how to do it", with no sense of ethic or self-critique beyond technical efficiency" (Groome 1991:71).

His second liability was that he said it was impossible to come to knowledge of faith or ethical conviction through life experience or through one's own active engagement as an agent-subject in history. This ignores God's revelation in history.

Kant however had an enormous influence on the epistemology of the West. For Groome (1991:70), three aspects of Kant's thought are assets to promote faith formation.

- 1) His insight that we are not spectators before reality (contra "banking" education), but active knowers in interaction with the world, must be remembered. He proposes a balanced and interactive relationship between subject knowing and object known.
- 2) His "biology" of theoretical reasoning offers an explicit analysis of "the activities we perform as we come to know the world" (Groome 1991:71).
- 3) He does not take the categories of space and time for granted, but implies that people should engage with and come to consciousness of their location in time and place. This idea Groome develops further when he comes to the participants in the learning-teaching process.

For Groome, Kant occupies a middle position in the history of epistemology.

Rationalism		Empiricism
<i>The intellect as origin and form of reliable knowledge</i>		<i>Experience is the first source of true ideas</i>
	<b>Kant:</b> Sensation and thought together and learner is active agent	

Through Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Lock, and Kant, Groome has indicated some broad contours of the dominant epistemological tradition in Western philosophy. The previous pages can thus be summarised as follows:

<b>Rationalism</b>		<b>Empiricism</b>
<i>The intellect as origin and form of reliable knowledge</i>		<i>Experience is the first source of true ideas</i>
	<b><i>Greek philosophy</i></b>	
<b>Plato:</b> Ideas over all		<b>Aristotle:</b> lived experience is source of knowledge for praxis and productive activities (poiesis)
	<b><i>Christian faith</i></b>	
<b>Augustine:</b> Truth already within (reason, memory and will); unity of thought and action		<b>Aquinas:</b> Nothing is ever in the mind that was not first in the senses; unity
	<b><i>Modern rationalism</i></b>	
<b>Descartes:</b> Cogito, ergo sum; dualism		<b>John Locke (Empiricism):</b> Look at the facts
	<b>Kant:</b> Sensation and thought together; learner is active agent	

### 2.2.2 History of education

Thus far Groome has demonstrated that the debate about the process of knowing was characterised by a tension between knowledge promoted through self-discovery of the learner through present experience, and knowledge attained by awakening the dormant potential in the person of what is already known. Throughout the history of education the concern for the past and present (or in current educational literature, for the “disciplines of knowledge” and the “present experience of the students”) has been constantly present. This, as Groome shows in his book, *Christian religious education* (1980:10), is especially evident in educational debates since Comenius.



### 2.2.2.1 Epistemology in the educational debate

John Comenius<sup>29</sup> (1592-1670) argued, as far back as the seventeenth century, for an inductive method of teaching. He wanted teaching to be "under the guidance of nature that begins with the native abilities and experience of students". On the other hand, Augustus Hermann Francke (1663-1727) "... was arguing for education in accurate and vivid knowledge to be imparted by strictly disciplined instruction" (Groome 1980:10). Francke was the chief theoretician of the Prussian education system, and his proposals became a model for all of Europe.

#### Disciplines of knowledge

<i>Francke</i>
Disciplined instruction

#### Present experiential learning

<i>Comenius</i>
Inductive method of teaching

"Later in the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth, Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and his student Friedrich Froebel<sup>30</sup> (1782-1852) argued for a pupil-centered, experiential approach. Pestalozzi perhaps "made his most effective contribution to educational theory and method by his theory of individual development, and his emphasis upon the importance of relationships (Megill 1976:36-37). Their contemporary and perhaps more influential colleague Johann Herbart (1776-1841), however, favored an approach centered in the subject matter of the disciplines". He put great stress upon the social and moral character of education and the systematic formulation of "methods" of teaching. (Groome 1980:10 and Megill 1976:37).

#### Disciplines of knowledge

<i>Herbart</i>
an approach centered in the subject matter

#### Present experiential learning

<i>Pestalozzi/ Froebel</i>
pupil-centered, experiential approach

<sup>29</sup> He was a Moravian teacher, minister and bishop who formulated the first laws of teaching:

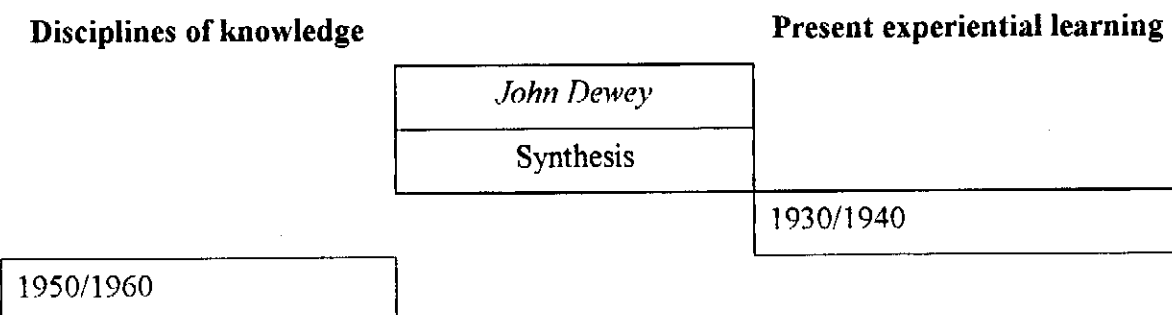
1. All instruction must be carefully graded and arranged to follow the order of nature as revealed in a child's development.
2. Proceed from the simple to the complex, known to the unknown.
3. Approach through appeals to sense experience. Use actual objects whenever possible, or at least pictures or representations (Megill 1976:36).

<sup>30</sup> It was he who established the first *kindergarten* (German for 'children's garden'). For him play was the most important phase in the development of the child (Megill 1976:37).

John Dewey (1859-1952), American philosopher and educator, perceived the lines of the debate and argued for a synthesis between the disciplines of knowledge and present experiential learning. For Dewey education begins with a grounding in present experiential activity. But he did not limit education to the "present experience".

He claimed that experience should be organised by the "method of intelligence" so as to "lead the students back into the disciplines of knowledge which arise from the similar experience of the race over its past history" (Groome 1980:11). In this way these two poles could be brought together (Dewey 1938:514).

This call of Dewey's for a synthesis, has continued to be honoured more in theory than in practice. Groome further points out that the student-centered experiential approach of the 1930s and 1940s was replaced in the late 1950s and 1960s by a return to the disciplines of learning.



#### 2.2.2.2 *Epistemology in the Protestant history of Christian education*

This same polarity of positions may be discerned in the recent history of Christian religious education.

There is a group of religious education theorists who places primary emphasis on teaching the content of the biblical message and the Christian tradition. According to Groome (1980:148) this puts them in the 'disciplines of learning' school of education. H. Shelton Smith and James D. Smart represent this emphasis in the Protestant traditions.

**H. Shelton Smith** (1893-): Through his neo-orthodox position, he brought the liberal religious educators of the 1940's back to the basic kerygma of the Christian message. He was concerned that liberals were overlooking the biblical and doctrinal content of the tradition. Smith (in Cully 1965:20) writes: "The question therefore has arisen: Shall Protestant nurture realign its theological foundations with the newer currents of Christian thought (theocentric, transcendentalist, Trinitarian theology - NWS), or shall it resist those currents and merely reaffirm its faith in traditional liberalism?" He warns against the latter which is theologically based on secular philosophical positions rather than on biblical foundations.

**James D. Smart:** Following Smith's lead, he emphasised the transmission of the biblical and doctrinal messages as the basis of Christian education. He called for more thorough training in biblical interpretation, history, and doctrine for teachers (Cully 1955:78).

Smith and Smart keep reminding us that faith formation must fully impart and teach the message of Christianity.

There are, however, also other voices in this debate. There has been a significant shift towards a mode of knowing that is relational, experiential, and active. The other side's primary emphasis is not on content but on an experiential way of knowing in religious education. This is also advocated by many leading Protestant theorists. Groome cites some examples of people for whom religious education and formation arise from the lived experience and interaction of people in communities of Christian faith. This group of people insists that an active/reflective and relational/experiential way of "knowing God" is consistent with a biblical understanding of how we come to know God.

**Lewis Sherrill (1892-):** He correlates the common predicaments of human experience with themes of the Bible (Sherrill 1963:92-118). The theology of Paul Tillich influenced his views considerably. For him Christian education is the attempt to guide the changes which take place in people in their relationship to God, the Church, other, the world, and oneself. In *The Rise of Christian education* (1944:305), he concludes with the words: "The parent spring of better education must lie, not in little techniques, but deep in the Christian's experience of God."

**Iris Cully:** She proposes a "Life centered experiential way of knowing". She is influenced by Barthian neo-orthodoxy and also existentialism, and her dual focus on kerygma and a "life-centered" method (Cully 1960:90-115 and Cully 1965:81), originates in this.

**Randolph C. Miller:** Groome (1980:147) considers Miller, after Coe, as the most influential Protestant theorist of this century. He proposes an empirical epistemological base for both Christian theology and education. For him Christian knowing arises from reflection on one's own experience in relationship with the Christian community's experience. He advocates a socialisation model arising from reflection on human experience and grounded in the home and in the nurturing congregation. The core of the curriculum is a twofold relationship between God and the learner. The curriculum is both God-centered and experience-centered. ... Theology is "truth-about-God-in-relationship-to-man" (Cully 1965:66).

**D. Campbell Wyckoff:** Wyckoff concentrated on devising a sound curriculum theory for Christian education. He proposed that the "Church's experience" should be the organising principle of the curriculum (Wyckoff 1961:120 and 1955:72-76) and that the curriculum

should be encountered through involvement in the life, work, worship and witnessing of a community.

#### Transmission of content

<b>Smith</b> Biblical content
<b>Smart</b> The transmission of biblical and doctrinal messages

#### Active/ reflective/ experiential

<b>Sherrill</b> The common predicaments of human experience
<b>Cully</b> Life centered experiential way of knowing
<b>Miller</b> Reflection on one's own experience
<b>Wyckoff</b> Church's experience

To be fair one must add that, to varying degrees, all these theorists have claimed that the 'content' of the Christian faith tradition should also be part of the formation process. "None of them confines Christian knowing to what can be discovered in one's own present relationships and experience. The biblical message and tradition of Christianity must be taught, even as it can only be truly 'known,' by encountering it within lived experience and by an active/reflective process" (Groome 1980:148).

In a similar way there is a significant shift in the Catholic tradition towards a mode of knowing that is relational, experiential and active. Here one thinks of Pierre Babin and Marcel Caster (experiential catechesis), Gabriel Moran (experiential/ relational/ reflective education), James Michael Lee (learning from experience) and (Groome 1980:146-147).

## 2.3 Conclusions on the epistemological debate

### 2.3.1. An epistemological question: *How do we come to reliable knowledge?*

Groome (1980:150), points out that throughout history the answers to the question: "How do we come to reliable knowledge?" were divided by what people regarded as the source of knowledge. He labels the two opposing sides in the debate *rationalism* or *idealism* and *empiricism* or *realism*:

<b>Rationalism/Idealism</b>	<b>Empiricism/Realism</b>
human knowledge from within knowledge determined by the universal and innate ideas of the knowing subject	human knowledge from without knowledge as a reflection of what actually exists in reality
<b>Rationalism</b>	<b>Realism</b>
Truth not known by the senses because world is changeable	What is known is an expression of what is real and nothing is ever in the mind that is not first in the senses
<b>Idealism</b>	<b>Empiricism</b>
Real world of ideas above the sensible world. This world is superior, nonsensible and universal.	No separate transcendent world of forms
The human mind or soul has the ability to have contact with the ideal, eternal objects of the nonsensible world.	The soul is a set of faculties possessed by the body. Knowledge arises from the bodily senses
Forms are the sources of real immutable truth.	Senses provide the data that is appropriated and judged by reason

However oversimplified, this division has appeared in the epistemological debate for more than two and a half millennia. This division was already present in pre-Socratic times.

<b>Rationalism/Idealism</b>	<b>Empiricism/Realism</b>
<b>Parmenides</b> stressed the primacy of reason in human knowing	<b>Heraclitus</b> emphasised the role of the senses in human knowing.

The epistemological question became central in the philosophy of Plato. Plato may be described as a rationalist and an idealist. In contrast to Plato, Aristotle may be considered an empiricist and realist. The same line of debate can be found two thousand years later between the seventeenth-century rationalists and empiricists.

<b>Rationalism</b>		<b>Empiricism</b>
<i>The intellect as origin and form of reliable knowledge</i>		<i>Experience is the first source of true ideas</i>
	<b>Greek philosophy</b>	
<b>Plato:</b> Ideas over all		<b>Aristotle:</b> lived experience is source of knowledge for praxis and productive activities (poiesis)
	<b>Christian faith</b>	
<b>Augustine:</b> Truth already within (reason, memory and will); unity of thought and action		<b>Aquinas:</b> Nothing is ever in the mind that was not first in the senses, unity
	<b>Modern rationalism</b>	
<b>Descartes:</b> Cogito, ergo sum; dualism between mind and body		<b>John Locke (Empiricism):</b> Look at the facts
	<b>Kant:</b> Sensation and thought together; learner is active agent	

The idealism line is later picked up by Hegel, a philosophical idealist/rationalist in the Plato tradition, while Marx forged his own brand of realism and empiricism.

<b>Rationalism/Idealism</b>	<b>Empiricism/Realism</b>
Hegel	Marx Knowledge arises from the concrete historical activity of the knowing subject acting upon the world

Attempts have been made to find a merger between these two lines in the epistemological debate. Groome concludes his chapter on epistemology by describing four movements in philosophy between Kant and the mid-twentieth century that attempted to bridge this gap. These movements are Marxism, phenomenology, existentialism, and pragmatism. The study briefly reviews the insights of each of these movements which are most salient for our interests in faith formation.

### **2.3.2 Four significant movements**

#### **2.3.2.1 Marxism**

Karl Marx (1818-1883) favoured a "praxis way of knowing". For him praxis is "the productive activity of people done reflectively in social context" (Groome 1991:72). Knowledge arises from engaging reflectively with productive labour (Aristotle's category of poiesis) in the world to be transformed.

"As a thorough materialist, Marx insisted that all thought and culture reflect the material conditions, and especially the economic conditions of life. ... People's consciousness and knowledge, ... are shaped by their social location and by the structures of ownership, exchange, distribution, and so on in which they are located. ... There is ... no such thing as objective, universally valid experience or knowledge. Human beings and our knowledge are irrevocably historical and hence conditioned by time and place" (Groome 1991:73).

Obviously Marx's atheistic and materialistic economic interpretation of history is in conflict with the basic tenets of Christian faith. Yet his insight, that our knowing is powerfully shaped by our context, must be honoured in faith formation. "It should invite participants to develop a critical consciousness of the influence of all social and cultural conditions on their 'being' in the world ... " (Groome 1991:73-4).

The next two movements, phenomenology and existentialism, emphasise the historical subjective consciousness of all "knowers". This is accomplished in an attempt to correct the pragmatists' lack of attention to the subjective condition and situation in time of the knowing subject (Groome 1980:151).

#### **2.3.1.2 Phenomenology**

The primary architect of Phenomenology was the German-Czech philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). He, like Descartes, was searching for certainty in the face of scepticism. He found his certainty not in the cogito-argument, but rather in the pristine experience of phenomena.

"Phenomenology as an epistemology recognizes that all knowledge, meaning, and truth is grounded in our 'life-world' of experience, where our consciousness first encounters phenomena through prereflective acts of perception, imagination, and language. People's 'knowing,' then, has its origin in our historical experience of 'things themselves' as they are present to our own consciousness, rather than in any objectified theory about things as others tell us that they are" (Groome 1991:74). Thus the meaning of the world is how it appears to us and our subjective consciousness is the mode in which we look at it."

For Husserl, intuition has a special role in the interactive relationship between consciousness and phenomena. Imagination has a key function as we move from particular instances of a phenomenon to its universal truths.

What then are his significant insights for faith formation?

Phenomenology emphasises that our own consciousness is primary in the activity of knowing and it prompts us to become aware of our self-consciousness. Secondly, Husserl's emphasis on the analysis of our own consciousness, holds the potential of critical consciousness.

Lastly he reminds us of the importance of becoming aware of what we are bringing in to the text, for the text should speak for itself. "Only with awareness of our own subjectivity can we hope to allow the texts to bring their meaning to the present" (Groome 1991:74).

### **2.3.1.3 Existentialism**

Existentialism eschews the quest for universal certainties and instead gives priority to individual existence. Groome (1991:76) takes the work of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), as a significant instance and highlights some aspects in existentialism which support faith formation.

Heidegger sets out to "investigate the most foundational aspects of our 'being' as they present themselves to consciousness. By uncovering the existential structures and moods of 'being' that shape our consciousness<sup>31</sup>, we will also know how and what we know" (Groome 1991:76).

Heidegger's most significant contribution to an approach to faith formation is his attempt to reunite epistemology with ontology, knowing with 'being.' He considers the latter to be primary, and sees 'knowing' as the consciousness that arises from paying attention to 'being.'

His second asset is that he, perhaps more than any philosopher in the Western tradition, looked honestly into the 'abyss' and faced the possibility that there is no world of meaning and truth 'ready-at-hand' for us to discover. He is an extreme example of the brokenness of the human condition.

---

<sup>31</sup> The following is the key characteristics of his ontology: The Centrality of Existence, Alienation and Thingification, Authentic and Inauthentic Existence, and Dread, Death and Care. (Groome 1991:76)



He, however, has a profound liability for faith formation in the rugged individualism and self-sufficient resolve he proposes. His appreciation of relationship was more linguistic than real. For him authenticity is worked out in solitude<sup>32</sup>.

#### **2.3.1.4 Pragmatism**

The pragmatists attempt to combine the two dimensions of human knowledge, but add "... a tentativeness to their conclusion and an openness to human knowing by making utility the ultimate criterion of all truth" (Groome 1991:78). They have an interest in results, 'things done,' obtained from the Greek word *pragma*.

Pragmatism had a great influence on American education with John Dewey as one of its leading exponents. The emphasis was on the 'practical,' 'recognizable results,' 'consequences,' and 'fruitfulness in practice' of ideas. Truth was considered to be what was warranted by its verifiable results.

Is there an asset for faith formation in this emphasis? It is true that "... Christian faith is to be 'done.' ... Christians are to be known by their fruit more than by clarity of ideas. ... On the other hand, a purely pragmatic interest would be reductionistic for religious education. (a) It can lead to relativism, ... (b) establishing 'what works' as the only criterion of right and wrong" (Groome 1991:78-9).

In these last four more recent movements, we see attempts to overcome the opposing standpoints in the epistemological debate. We would be misled, however, if we were to presume that the debilitating aspects of the dominant epistemological tradition have been transcended.

#### **2.3.3 Bridging the dualism**

Newbigin (1995: 65), writes in *Proper Confidence* that it is "unreasonable to set up opposition between observation and reason on the one hand and revelation and faith on the other". He then points out that *revelation* in the Christian tradition is more than the communication of information. It is an invitation, a summons, a call. It is also reconciliation, atonement and salvation. "There exists no neutral reason that can decide impartially on the truth or falsehood of the Christian gospel. On the contrary, if it is true that Jesus is the Word made flesh, then to know Jesus must be the basis for all true knowledge" (Newbigin 1995:96 and 1966:147).

---

<sup>32</sup> For faith formation in Christian faith, our existential mentor is Buber rather than Heidegger. For him authenticity may be found in an I-Thou relationship.

Newbigin (1989:24) suggests that this tragic split within Christendom can only be healed as "... a part of the wider healing of the split in our culture as a whole, only through a resolute assault on the fundamental problem which is epistemology,..."

He (Newbigin 1995:10) remarks: "What is obvious and important at this stage is that the acceptance of the biblical tradition as a starting point for thought constitutes a radical break with the classical tradition, whether in its Platonic or Aristotelian form. ... there is another kind of knowing ... It is the kind of knowing that we seek in our relations with other people."

With the switch from the classical worldview to that which is based on the biblical story two ways may be observed in which understanding has changed radically (Newbigin 1995:14):

1. "If the place where we look for ultimate truth is in a story ... then it follows that we walk by faith and not by sight. If ultimate truth is sought in an idea, a formula, or a set of timeless laws or principles, then we do not have to recognize the possibility that something totally unexpected may happen. ... But if we find ultimate truth in a story, ... [t]he certainty we have rests on the faithfulness of the one whose story it is. We walk by faith" (Newbigin 1995:14).

2. The two worldviews differ in the roles that seeing and hearing play. In the classical view, true knowledge is vision, *theoria*. It is the vision of eternal truth. One therefore makes a distinction between *theoria* and *praxis*. One must first grasp the vision and then, as a second step, find ways of embodying it through action. Readers of the Bible will have noticed that these terms are totally absent. "Because ultimate reality is personal, God's address to us is a word conveying his purpose and promise, a word which may be heard or ignored, obeyed or disobeyed" (Newbigin 1995:15).

According to Athanasius, the fact that God had acted in history, provided a new arch, a new starting point for all human understanding of the world. The *logos* had become part of history in Jesus and the two dualisms which were fundamental to classical thought were no longer tenable. "One was the dualism between the "sensible" and the "intelligible", ...[t]he other was the dualism between being and becoming." In Jesus this dualism was bridged.

It is important to note that by taking the thinking self as his starting point, Descartes confirmed three dualisms:

1. The first is the dualism between the thinking mind and the world of things extended in space. This is very similar to the dualism which dominated classical thought as shown above, namely, that between ideas and senses.

"The early church had to overcome this dualism if it was to affirm as public truth the gospel's central statement that the logos was identical with the man Jesus of Nazareth. ... It formulated its rejection of the dualism in the statement that the one God was creator of both the visible and invisible realities" (Newbigin 1995:37).

2. The second dualism is expressed with the words "objective" and "subjective". "Those who labored in the nineteenth century to propagate the opinion that science was the only avenue to objective truth and that it must therefore replace religion as the locus of public truth succeeded in implanting the objective-subjective dualism idea deep in the public mind" (Newbigin 1995:38).

3. The third dualism is the dualism between theory and practice. "The words obviously belong to the dualistic worldview in which one first develops a mental picture of how things are and how they ought to be and then, as a second step, applies this picture to the "real" situation. ... the ultimate reality in the Bible is personal, we are brought into conformity with this reality not by the two-step process of theory and practice, vision and action, but by a single action comprised of hearing, believing, and obeying" (Newbigin 1995:39).

Of these three dualisms, Newbigin considers the second, the dualism between the objective and the subjective, as the most important. The point is: "No coherent thought is possible without presuppositions. What is required for honest thinking is that one should be as explicit as possible about what these presuppositions are. The presupposition of all valid and coherent Christian thinking is that God has acted to reveal and effect his purpose for the world in the manner made known in the Bible" (Newbigin 1989:8). He explains, by referring to the Hungarian scientist Michael Polanyi, that all knowing of reality involves the personal commitment of the knower as a whole person: New advances in science only come after long apprenticeship in the tradition of scientific work. Scientists work by "indwelling" in the assumptions, findings and methods of the past. They have to trust the tradition in order to make advances in knowledge. "The explicit formulations of scientists rest upon this vast area of tacit knowledge which they share ...with all human beings" (Newbigin 1995:42)

But more than that, "... scientific discovery involves such gifts as intuition, imagination to project possible patterns, prudence coupled with a willingness to take risks, and courage and patience in pursuing a long and arduous course of investigation. ... They all involve the personal commitment of the scientist, and it is absurd to pretend that the findings of science can be understood without taking into account all these subjective factors" (Newbigin 1995:410).

Polanyi's concern was to alert the scientific community to the danger of an absolute dichotomy between knowing and believing, such as Descartes has bequeathed to us. He wants to demonstrate that: Knowing always involves the personal commitment of the knowers. Newbigin (1995:45-58 ) makes the following relevant observations on bridging this dichotomy:

1. All efforts to know must begin with something given. This given includes what we normally call data, the facts that form part of the foundation on which our reason is based. It also includes, as previously argued, the tradition of knowing which has been developed in a community and which includes the language and all the conceptual tools used in that tradition. Newbigin (1995:97), argues that all truth is culturally and historically embodied.

2. The Christian heritage is essentially a story, the story told in the Bible. This story can not be understood apart from the church and the community that is shaped by the story that the book tells. "Now the point to be made here is as follows: A story cannot provide the kind of indubitable certainty which was the ideal of Descartes. ...The only possible responses to the claims that the Bible makes are belief or unbelief. ...There is no scientific way of testing the claims and promises that the Bible makes" (Newbigin 1995: 54).

"The Church, therefore, as the bearer of the gospel, inhabits a plausibility structure (a term used by Peter Berger, NWS) which is at variance with, and which calls in question, those that govern all human cultures without exception" (Newbigin 1989:9).

Clearly then reason does not operate except within a "Continuing social tradition which cannot be understood ... unrelated to the ongoing experiences of the community which carries this tradition forward." The same can be said of experience: "All experience is interpreted experience" (Newbigin 1989:58).

In his book, *To understand God Truly* (1992:31,33), David Kelsey notes that the subject matter on which theological schools (and their subsequent education) focus, is influenced by the community who studies those matters which are believed to lead to a true understanding of God. "Since the subject matter on which theological schools focus (in the belief that its study will lead to truer understanding of God) is itself construed in irreducibly different ways, then that which makes all schools nonetheless of the same kind (namely, theological schools) cannot be that they all finally study the same subject matter." The Reformed tradition chose "the word of God" as the subject matter on which it focuses. Furthermore Kelsey then indicates (in line with our debate) that there have been four dominant answers to the question: What is it to understand God? These variations on the picture of what it is to understand God, deeply shape faith formation. These different notions will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

He shows that theological schools endeavour to answer the question: What is excellent schooling? In trying to answer this question, theological schools get caught "between Athens and Berlin". "[T]hey are faced with trying to be accountable to two different models of excellent schooling, for one of which ancient Athens is emblematic and for the other of which modern Berlin is emblematic. For historical reasons they cannot evade either model" (Kelsey 1992:97). Faith formation has to negotiate a way between *paideia*<sup>33</sup>, on the one side, and *Wissenschaft*<sup>34</sup> -and-professionalism on the other.

"The Christian tradition of rationality takes as its starting point not any alleged self-evident truths. Its starting point is events in which God made himself known to men and women in particular circumstances - to Abraham and Moses, to a long succession of prophets, and to the first apostles and witnesses who saw and heard and touched the incarnate Word of God himself, Jesus of Nazareth<sup>35</sup>. These are all happenings within the world of secular events, the world which is investigated by the natural and human sciences. These revelations were always addressed to men and women in particular contexts and called for specific responses within and appropriate to these contexts" (Newbigin 1989:63).

Newbigin, Polanyi, Kelsey and McGrath (discussed below) indicate that none of the epistemological models discussed so far bring absolute truth. All knowledge involves a personal commitment by the knower. There is no absolute grip on the truth. All knowledge is faith-based. All experience is interpreted through our tacit underlying faith assumptions. The ultimate truth of the Christian heritage cannot be understood apart from the community formed by this Story.

---

<sup>33</sup> The Greek word *paideia* meant, among other things, *character formation*.

<sup>34</sup> Here the focus is on rigorous "scientific" research.

<sup>35</sup> Please see McGrath's (1996:36-51) remarks about the "Uniqueness of Jesus Christ". He says: "For Christians, Jesus is the embodiment and self-revelation of God. At the heart of the Christian faith stands a living person, not a book." He shows the contrast between the Islamic and Christian notions of revelation. McGrath thinks the Christian view is brought out clearly by Martin Luther, "Islam has the Qur'an and Judaism the Torah; yet for Christians, ...Christ alone is the means, the life, and the mirror through which we see God and know his will."

### The break in the epistemological debate

"Objective, absolute" truth reason	Truth as a Story faith
Theory vs. practice, vision vs. action Two-step process	Hearing <i>and</i> believing <i>and</i> obeying Single action
Dichotomy	Polarity

*All knowledge is faith-based.*

Once freed from the dominant dichotomy of the epistemological debate, there is room to accept the polarity and interdependence of the various schools in the epistemological debate. In reaching these conclusions, it is now possible to bridge this dualism and accept the polarities in the epistemological debate. Now it is also possible to live with the mystery of faith again.

#### 2.3.4 Conclusions

The main schools of epistemology have taught us the following about faith formation:

- a) The importance of active *remembrance* of tradition.
- b) The importance of *engaging people as* agent-subjects-in-relationship.
- c) The importance of *mystery*, art and poetry.

A synopsis of the scenario follows:

##### ***2.3.4.1 The importance of active remembrance of tradition in faith formation.***

There can be no faith formation without active remembrance of tradition. Education for the sake of wisdom must include the knowledge of people from their historical praxis as part of the curriculum. Plato thought that there was a reliable source and measure of truth beyond sensoric perception that was not of our construction alone. We as Christians can claim no less. Furthermore, we believe that this "truth" must be known, thought about and critically reflected on (Aristotle). And Plato reminds us that right ideas should shape 'being' and draw us forward by desire.

Both Plato and Aristotle have a strong commitment to reason and logic, but this forces them to an ahistoric understanding of knowledge. The disparaging of the historical as a way of knowing by Plato, threatens the historicity of divine revelation. Did "the Truth" not become flesh in person? Aristotle must be rejected on this point because he reflects a

“forgetfulness of being” by estranging the theoretical, practical, and poetic/productive activities in life from one another.

Aristotle presumes that knowledge is ahistorical, dispassionate and disinterested. He understands God as a God of “thought” in contrast to the God of Hebrew and Christian Scripture. Here God is portrayed as a God of love and justice who is actively engaged in covenant with all humanity.

Augustine also deals with a hierarchical dualism between mind and body. This leads us to believe that reasonable faith may lead to praxis, but historical praxis can never deepen people’s faith or understanding of it.

Aquinas’s situating of faith in the intellect rather than in the will, encourages a very rationalised presentation of “the faith.” He is entirely patriarchal in his understanding of the intellect, thus excluding women and all “common people.” Thomism shapes the later education ministry of the Catholic church. Even though the Reformers have rejected Scholastic rationalism, in religious education Luther is the great popularizer of the catechism question-and-answer approach, and Calvin follows his example. The church turned towards the modern era using a pedagogy far removed from faith formation.

Descartes’s rationalism and unqualified dualism between mind and body have had enormous influence on Western epistemology. Through his influence, Western philosophy shifts to the individual subject as the agent and source of knowledge. He affirms the role and responsibility of each person in their own knowing and knowledge. He initiated the practice of critical reasoning in the process of knowing.

The problem is that he equates knowledge with rational certainty. This excludes the “common sense” knowledge that people obtain from their historical praxis through Western education. “This encouraged the church to teach in a dogmatic and doctrinaire mode, excluding any sense that the praxis of people is an integral part of their curriculum. The church now more obviously presumed (a) that it has such rational certainty in its Scriptures and official teachings and (b) that “the faith” must be presented in a deductive mode and as rationally certain if the “common people” are to give it their commitment” (Groome 1991:62).

Rational thinking, for Descartes, is a rugged individualistic and nondialogical activity. He has no awareness of the influence of social context and psychological conditions on people’s thinking. This is clearly historical naïveté and isolationism unsuited for faith formation. This is also Locke’s liability: he presumes “objectivity” and is unaware of the social influence on and interest of gathering and interpreting data.

The question addressed to Locke is still the same: what do we do with the truths recognised and systematised by others around and before us? It is not clear how the tradition of biblical revelation can be appropriated in an exclusively empirical process.

Nothing is more detrimental to faith formation than Kant's separation of theoretical and practical reasoning. Through this separation he re-establishes the old dichotomies between theory and praxis, understanding and will, science and ethics.

Kant's "biology" of theoretical reasoning offers an explicit analysis of "the activities we perform as we come to know the world". He does not take the categories of space and time for granted, but implies that people must engage with and come to consciousness of their location in time and place.

The Enlightenment's assumption that there is only one "rationality", independent of time and space and culture, is no longer regarded as having any credibility. "Where once it was argued that there was one single rational principle, it is now conceded that there are - and always have been - many different 'rationalities' " (McGrath 1996:89). This recognition that frameworks of rationality are socially and historically located, is of considerable importance to Christian theology, particularly in faith formation.

Active remembrance of tradition does not see traditional doctrine or belief as a binding force on account of its antiquity. McGrath (1996:95) remarks: "[C]ritical appraisal of tradition was an integral element of the Reformation, and was based on the foundational belief that tradition was ultimately an interpretation of Scripture which had to be justified with reference to the same authoritative source." But he has a heading for modern evangelicalism: "[They] have always been prone to read Scripture as if they were the first to do so. We need to be reminded that others have been there before us, and have read it before us. This process of receiving the scriptural revelation is 'tradition'."

Remembrance of tradition and Scripture are not two alternative sources of revelation; they are rather co-inherent. For this reason Luther understood tradition as "a history of discipleship - of reading, interpreting and wrestling with Scripture. Tradition is a willingness to read Scripture, taking into account the ways in which it has been read in the past. It is an awareness of the communal dimension of Christian faith, over an extended period of time, which calls the shallow individualism of many evangelicals into question. There is more to the interpretation of Scripture than any one individual can discern. It is a willingness to give full weight to the views of those who have gone before us in the faith, providing forceful reminders of the corporate nature of the Christian faith, including the interpretation of Scripture" (McGrath 1996:96)



#### 2.3.4.2 *The importance of engaging people as agent-subjects-in-relationship in faith formation*

There can be no faith formation without the engagement of people as agent-subjects-in-relationship. Aristotle understood that praxis includes all reflective activities that engage the whole person and that only this can lead to ethical action. He further included both the empirical and rational in the dynamic of “knowing”.

This is in contrast to Plato's claim that knowing the ideals of goodness and justice will lead people to live accordingly. Plato dismissed the role of praxis and imagination in forming people's wills in the habit of virtue. But like him, Aristotle separated praxis from *theoria* and relegated it to an inferior social and cognitive status.

In line with Aristotle, Augustine attributed importance to people's own memory in the catechetical process. He indicated that people's stories were a source of wisdom, and he appreciated the revelatory capacity of personal remembrance. His affirmation that “truth resides within” suggests that people must engage as agent subjects in knowing their faith. People are thus active participants rather than passive receptacles for “banking.” However he did not go far enough, his endeavour to unify faith and reason was an exclusive one. He excludes the body, women, and common people from knowledge.

Aquinas is acknowledged by a “remembrance of being” in the unity he proposes between soul/mind and body in the process of knowing. Likewise he maintains a unity between theoretical and practical reasoning. He is not a naive empiricist, and insists on the role of intellect in knowledge. This epistemology recognises a theological method that is a reflection on life experience in the light of Scripture and tradition.

For Aquinas, “knowing” begins with *attention* to and *comprehension* of the data of experience. This is understood by the intellect and then judged. What is truly ‘known’ by people as their own is not ‘poured in’ from outside.

Descartes's epistemology had a greater “forgetfulness of being” than any philosopher before him. He reduced the mind to reason alone, and maintained a hierarchical dualism between mind and body. He did not facilitate the engagement of people as agent-subjects-in-relationship in his epistemology.

For Locke, all general ideas are abstracted from sensory data (as for Aristotle), but in the process of knowing, the mind is both shaped by and dependent on experience (a notion very unlike Aristotle's, and in total contrast to Descartes's).

The central insight of Empiricism, that personal sensory experience is constitutive of human knowledge and knowing, and shapes our ontic selves, should be taken seriously in faith formation. The truly “empirical” in education affirms that the incarnation is the core

and claim of Christian faith. We come to know God through God's recognisable activity in creation and in history - our own, and the history of the faith community.

For Locke, however, there is no recognition of the "knower" as an agent-subject. If this is true, there is no agency or freedom in our "being" and "becoming". His understanding of experience as totally passive, something we simply "undergo", overlooks the engagement of agent-subjects in this world.

Kant's insight, that we are not spectators before reality (contra "banking" education), but active knowers in interaction with the world, must be remembered. He proposes a balanced and interactive relationship between subject knowing and object known.

He maintains, however, that it is impossible to come to faith or ethical conviction from life experience or from one's own active engagement as an agent-subject in history. This denies that God reveals Himself in history.

These people call our attention to "experience" in the process of faith formation. But as McGrath (1996:71), reminds us: "Experience is an imprecise term." The word is derived from the Latin term *experientia*, which means 'that which arises out of travelling through life' (*ex-perientia*). Yet the term has an acquired meaning, referring to "the inner life of individuals, in which those individuals become aware of their own subjective feelings and emotions. ...This concern with human experience is particularly associated with existentialism, which has sought to restore an awareness of the importance of the inner life of individuals to both theology and philosophy" (McGrath 1996:71).

McGrath (1996: 72), sees two main approaches to the question of the relation of experience to theology, within Christian theology: "

1. The approach which has become especially associated with liberal writers, which argues that experience provides a foundational resource for Christian theory.
2. The traditional approach, associated with evangelicalism, which argues that Christian theology provides an interpretative framework by which human experience may be interpreted."

The first position suggests that there is some common universal 'religious experience', which Christian theology attempts to express in words. Experience comes first; theology comes later. McGrath (1996:74), thinks this theory notion of a common core experience which remains constant, is profoundly unconvincing and highly questionable. Further criticism of this theory may be found in Martin Luther's "*theology of the cross*". He emphasised simultaneously the importance of religious experience and its unreliability as a theological resource. He argues that experience "is *corrected* by doctrine; that experience is properly interpreted, even to the point of being contradicted, by and within a theological

framework. ...Theology engages with human experience; yet experience often needs to be criticized and radically *reinterpreted*" (McGrath 1996:77).

The second approach considers experience as something that needs to be interpreted. "Christian theology provides a framework by which the ambiguities of experience may be interpreted. Theology aims to interpret experience. It is like a net which we can cast over experience, in order to capture its meaning. Experience is seen as something which is to be interpreted, rather than something which is itself capable of interpreting." McGrath (1996:79), is much more positive about this approach and thinks it has an important contribution to make in an experience-centred age. He presents three points:

- 1) Theology addresses experience. "A theology which touches the mind, leaving the heart unaffected, is no true Christian theology."
- 2) Theology interprets experience. "We are made by God, and we experience a deep sense of longing for him, which only He can satisfy. ... this longing is a widespread feature of human nature and experience." An important point of contact for the proclamation of the gospel is thus established.
- 3) Theology offers to transform experience. Theology addresses experience, interprets it, and offers to transform it through the grace of God.

Although McGrath (1996:87), rejects any purely cognitive or purely experiential approach. He concludes that experience is a vital "point of contact" for Christian apologetics in a postmodern world. "Rather we must insist that experience is to be addressed, interpreted and transformed in the light of the gospel proclamation of redemption through Christ, as this is made known to us through Scripture."

#### ***2.3.4.3 The importance of mystery, art and poetry in faith formation***

There can be no faith formation without mystery, art and poetry. Aristotle first reminded us of the importance of imaginative creativity in knowing. He recognised the significance of *poiesis* for a virtuous life and as a valid way of living. For him all three lives are valid ways of knowing. He began to suggest that holistic engagement is needed to promote wisdom. However, he limited *poiesis* to labour that produces "things". It should rather include all creative, imaginative, and life-giving work of all humankind.

Augustine deals with a unity of reason, memory, and will. This unity has been lost in Western epistemology, especially with Descartes's emphasis on reason alone. Augustine limits the imaginative function of memory. "The imaginative and creative activities of poetry and art (*poiesis*) have no place, for Augustine, in coming into right relationship with or contemplation of God" (Groome 1991: 55).

## Conclusions

In Aristotle's "three lives", Groome clearly finds the rudimentary activities that constitute a "remembrance of being" and that are likely to promote wisdom in faith formation. He believes educators should engage, weave together, and hold all three activities in a symbiotic unity. In following him this study emphasises the importance of:

- a) the active *remembrance* of tradition in faith formation;
- b) *engaging people as agent-subjects-in-relationship* in faith formation; and
- c) *mystery*, art and poetry in faith formation.

When the three are reformulated and combined in a theory of faith formation:

The theoretical/contemplative (*theoria*) dimension is reflected by contemplative activities, by critical reasoning and by a narrative activity that makes accessible the tradition of God's revelation to this community over time - Christian "Story."

The practical/political (*praxis*) dimension arises from the engagement of people, and intends to shape people's 'being' in time and place.

The creative/imaginative (*poiesis*) dimension is honoured by attending to people's visions, to the mystery of God and to the Vision of God's reign by appealing to their imaginations and empowering their wills to be co-creators in God's reign now.

Groome, Newbigin, Kelsey and McGrath helped us to understand that the epistemological focus point has shifted and that shift allowed the epistemological dualism to succumb. Humankind interpret hermeneutically. Christianity believes (a faith-assumption) that faith formation originates with God who reveals himself in and through his Word. *Theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis* are three ways by which faith formation takes place in the process to understand God truly. The next Chapter will demonstrate that "formation is a relating community" and "transformation for social reconstruction" is also necessary for "knowing".

### **3. Between formation and transformation: Socialisation re-affirmed**

From Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke and Kant were drawn the broad contours of the dominant epistemological traditions in Western philosophy, up to and including the modern period. That their positions have shaped the church's praxis of faith education is beyond doubt, but none of their positions provided an adequate foundation for faith formation. There is a second dualism in the history of faith formation that must be discussed.

Throughout history people have given different answers to the socialisation<sup>36</sup> question: What is the formative influence of our social context? The previous chapter systematised Groome's thoughts on the various answers to the question: How do we come to reliable knowledge? It investigated the assets of and the important conclusions that can be drawn from every position. This Chapter wants to do likewise with the second question.

In this Chapter some of the key ideas of the major proponents of the socialisation approach (over the last hundred years) will be surveyed. Together they offer an explanation for the subtle differences in emphasis on the role of socialisation in Christian formation. Their key insights will enable us to reach three important conclusions:

- a) The importance of formation in a relating community
- b) The importance of transformation for social reconstruction
- c) The importance of immersion through mystery, art and poetry in faith formation

Let us, however, begin the Chapter with a few broad observations on the context of faith formation in general.

#### **3.1 A quest for the context of faith formation**

Formal education plays only a small part in our faith formation. Far more formative is the influence which arises simply from living within our social context. Therefore it is important that we should be aware of how the social context forms our self-identity. For Groome (1980:107), "... self-identity is socially mediated and maintained". In the process of coming to a Christian self-identity and to lived Christian faith, a Christian social context

---

<sup>36</sup> Under "socialisation" is understood the "processes by which a person is brought up in collectives to function successfully therein".

is required. “In other words, to come to be and remain Christian, requires a process of socialization in the midst of a Christian faith community” (Groome 1980:108).

The third Chapter will later survey some of the theorists of the “socialisation approach” and affirm their basic position. However, for Groome faith formation cannot just be an intensified form of socialisation. Christian religious education must also promote a critical reflective activity in the midst of our socialisation. **He argues for what this study calls traditioning and reinterpretation.**

How does Groome (1980:109) understand socialisation? He understands socialisation as “the process by which people come to be who they are by interaction with people in their social environment”. He further distinguishes between primary and secondary socialisation following sociologists like Berger and Luckman:

<b>primary socialisation</b>	<b>secondary socialisation</b>
Early formative process which forms children by interiorizing the implied value system of their primary parents.	Any subsequent process that inducts an individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society.
More permanent and decisive than secondary socialisation.	

How does this complex human phenomenon actually take place? One explanation outlines three movements in the process: externalisation, objectification, and internalisation. These are actually three simultaneous and inextricably interrelated movements:

<b>externalisation</b>	We “move outside ourselves” and enter into relationships. Together we develop structures, artifacts, arrangements, agreements, expectations, and patterns to support our being together.
<b>objectification</b>	Later the social structures and cultural patterns, which we created, begin to exist in their own right. They acquire a life of their own and become an objective reality. This form and structure of our society are maintained by people with authority in the name of the common good.
<b>internalisation</b>	The empowerments and limitations of this culture and society are now taken back into our consciousness as our own. “The ‘done thing’ takes on mandatory status, and people are expected to ‘role play’ to that mandate” (Groome 1980:112).

Groome (1980:113) emphasises that there is a dialectic relationship between a person and the social context. This means that “... the social/ cultural context does not totally determine an individual’s self-identity; in fact, the individual can give an altered shape to

his or her social reality". Groome (1980:114), contends that, "for the sake of individual autonomy and the ongoing reconstruction of society, both society and its members need the dialectic to be intentionally promoted".

If our identity is shaped by interaction with a collectivity, to become Christians we are required to have a socialising interaction with a Christian community which is capable of forming us in such faith. "It is within a Christian social/cultural environment that people come to appropriate the symbols which carry forward the tradition. It is there that they encounter role models, a world view, and a value system that can be interiorized as their own Christian self-identity" (Groome 1980:115).

The socialisation model for intentional Christian education has re-emerged in recent times. This approach continues the tradition which started with the catechumenate of the early church. This recent expression of the socialisation approach is in itself more than a hundred years old. Groome (1980:116-121), surveys some of the key ideas of the major proponents of this model. Together they offer a more complete explanation of the subtle differences in emphasis on the role of socialisation in Christian formation. Their key insights will enable us to define our educational task more clearly in relation to our community context.

### **3.1.1 Bushnell: Christian nurture through the family**

Horace Bushnell (1802-1876), was a forerunner of the modern theorists who recommend a socialisation approach to Christian education. He was in reaction to the revivalism<sup>37</sup> of his day, the 'conversion' emphasis of traditional Puritanism and the extreme Calvinism of the previous century. His best known work, *Christian Nurture*, was published in 1861.

He offered a study that, rather than waiting for conversion at a later age, a child is to be nurtured as Christian from the earliest years. He stated: ... "... the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise" (Bushnell 1967:4).

For Bushnell, the primary source of Christian nurture is at home. His emphasis on the primary role of parents and the home in Christian formation, is a lasting insight to which Christian educators must attend deliberately.

---

<sup>37</sup> "The attitude of the revivalists toward Christian formation was that, because of human depravity, children could not grow up as Christians but could only come to the faith by being 'born again'" (Groome 1980:116).

### **3.1.2 Coe: Education by the whole social ethos**

George Albert Coe (1862-1951), was greatly influenced by the Social Gospel movement and by “liberal” theology. He was very much involved in the “nurture tradition” and stated that the aim of religious education was “to make conversion unnecessary” (Coe in Groome 1980:117).

His friend and colleague, John Dewey, however, had the greatest influence on his educational ideas. “Dewey’s notion that education is the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race and that it is to be grounded in the reconstruction of experience (which in turn is to lead to social reconstruction) are central themes in Coe’s understanding of Christian religious education. ... (he) went beyond Bushnell’s emphasis on the family and saw the whole social network of reality as the primary educator” (Groome 1980:117). For him social interaction was at the heart of Christian education.

Coe was the first to pose the critical question with which this study continues to struggle: “Shall the primary purpose of Christian education be to hand on religion, or to create a new world?” (Coe in Groome 1980:118). In other words: Must we tradition or reinterpret? He favoured the last and demanded “creative” rather than “transmissive” education.

Creative education places primary focus on social reconstruction and employs transmissive processes to further the “democracy” (Kingdom) of God.

Coe taught us that our concern as religious educators is not just the Christian family life, but reform and reconstruction of the whole social ethos. This gave rise to the movement in Protestant church education which is called “liberal” or “progressive”.

### **3.1.3 Nelson: Communication of faith through the Christian community**

C. Ellis Nelson, (1916 - ) writing fifty years after Coe, approached the phenomenon of socialisation, with the help of social sciences, with a fresh perspective and a more critical eye. Drawing more on anthropology than sociology, he contended that the “natural agency” for communicating Christian faith is a Christian community. This is a community of faith formed through an association of believers who have permanent face-to-face relationships in a variety of situations and who are stable enough to function as a corporate group in carrying out their mutually developed plans and activities.

For Nelson, “... everything the church does, its whole way of being in the world and its way of being together, is educational. We educate by who we are as a faith community, and the quality of our corporate life together is our primary curriculum” (Groome 1980:119). Where Bushnell called attention to the family, and Coe to the broader social ethos, Nelson stressed the formative power of the whole Christian community (See



Nelson (ed.) 1988 *Congregations: Their Power to Form and Transform*, and Nelson 1992:13-22).

### 3.1.4 Westerhoff III: Christian formation through liturgy

John Westerhoff III continues to argue that people "... can only be nurtured within a self-conscious intentional community of faith" (Westerhoff 1976: 52). He considers the "schooling-instructional" paradigm for the church's ministry of education to be bankrupt. Instead we should make a shift to a "community of faith-enculturation paradigm". He choose the term "enculturation" to stress the need for mutual interaction in the socialisation process.

Not only does he try to incorporate the thoughts of Nelson on the Christian community, but he also urged the necessity of Coe's "social reconstruction". He emphasises the role of catechesis (his term) to lead people to the social action of "engaging in political activity". He insists that the church must train people to think politically, socially, economically, theologically and ethically. This can only happen if attention is given to the "hidden curriculum" in our education (Westerhoff 1976: 64-67)..

One of Westerhoff's "... most valuable insights include the role of liturgy, ritual, and symbol in Christian formation. ...He emphasises especially the formative influence of the "Church at worship" as it ritualizes and celebrates its faith together. By uniting learning and liturgy, Christian education could be enhanced; more important, our faith could be transmitted to our children" (Groome 1980:120 and Westerhoff 1976: 54-60).

This study regards his emphasis on liturgy as a middle road between community and social ethos. The four proponents of the socialisation model may be illustrated as follows:

<b>Bushnell</b>
Christian nurture through the <i>family</i>

<b>Nelson</b>	<b>Westerhoff III</b>	<b>Coe</b>
Communication of faith through the Christian <i>community</i>	Christian formation through <i>liturgy</i>	Education by the whole <i>social ethos</i>

Formation in a relating community	Immersion through mystery	Transformation for social reconstruction
-----------------------------------	---------------------------	--

### **3.2 The importance of critical reflection on the sociocultural situation.**

In "Sharing Faith", Groome (1990:98-108), makes even more observations about the "place" (as he calls the sociocultural situation) in which faith formation is realised. His point is that the "place" of participants is to be engaged in the dynamic of faith formation.

In the discussion of socialisation the question remains: Can we become our own autonomous person, or are we never more than the product of our socialisation? Are we determined by our context, or is there a dialectical relationship between people and their "place"?

Groome (1990:102), believes that the dialectic that takes place between "objectively assigned reality" and our "subjectively appropriated identity" in the process of socialisation, is quite minimal. "For identity and agency in Christian faith, socialization alone is insufficient, in and of itself, to promote ongoing conversion in people's faith journey, the renewal of the faith community itself, and the ministry of the church to be a sacrament of social transformation. As the church educates, so the church needs to be educated. The very dynamic of its pedagogy should be likely to encourage a dialectical relationship between people and their "place," both secular and ecclesiastical."

The problem with mere socialisation is that it "forms the great majority of people in a conventional level of faith and moral development" (Groome 1990:102). It is not likely to foster a personally owned and intrinsic faith. People's everyday work and relationships are not likely to promote an emancipatory dialectic with their sociocultural situation<sup>38</sup>. Therefore a dialogue needs to be and can be intentionally promoted. This must be one of the key factors in a theory for faith formation. The dynamics of faith formation should encourage participants to critically reflect on the context in which they exercise their Christian faith. "Without it, the domination and destruction of which all sociocultural situations ... are capable remain unchallenged, and Christian religious education, reduced to acting merely as an agency of socialization, fails to honor its ultimate purpose of God's reign." What is this critical reflection that should be a part of socialisation?

We need reason, memory, and imagination to self-consciously attend to our sociocultural situations and to critically reflect on how it shapes and is to be reshaped by us. For Groome (1990:104), faith formation requires religious educators to prompt participants to do "analytical and social remembering, critical and social reasoning, creative and social

---

<sup>38</sup> Here Groome is greatly influenced by Jurgen Habermas' schema and his depiction of "ways of knowing".

imagining” with regard to what is ‘going on’ around them, themselves, and others in their public “place.” This he describes as follows:

<b>The mental aspect of agent/subjects</b>	<b>Social critical reflection</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>memory</i> of the past	Analytical and social <i>remembering</i>	To attend to how our various ‘memberships’ have influenced us and what we do. It also uncovers the communal narrative that is sedimented in our sociocultural reality.
<i>reason</i> in the present	Critical and social <i>reasoning</i>	To question and interpret the structures, patterns, interests and ideologies that cause our personal and public life to be as it is.
<i>imagining</i> towards the future	Creative and social <i>imagining</i>	To see the social consequences and responsibilities of our own (and the society’s public life) activities.

It is therefore important for educators to note their facilitating role in bringing participants to critical reflection and enable them to do it intentionally and self-consciously. Socialisation cannot be mere socialisation. It must promote a dialectical relationship between participants and their “place”.

The importance of critical reflection as part of socialisation highlights another immediate question: What kind of discourse promotes critical reflection?

Within faith formation, we can distinguish between the “content” of its language and the “dynamic of discourse” that it creates.

With regard to content, Groome (1990:106), proposes: “The language world created by Christian religious education should reflect and propose to people a deep conviction of the profound dignity and worth of all people, a mode of relating that is based on the justice of ‘right relationships,’ mutuality, and partnership, a worldview that is humanizing for all and care-full of creation.”

With regard to “dynamic of discourse” he sponsors a pedagogy that is a dialogue among all partners. “Without an environment of dialogue, mutual exchange, and communal testing in a teaching/learning event, critical reflection can deteriorate into personal arbitrariness and/or total relativism” (Groome 1990:107). We must strive towards

“authentic dialogue<sup>39</sup>” in our faith formation. The more we approximate it, the more our pedagogy will encourage a lived Christian faith.

### 3.3 Conclusions drawn from the socialisation debate

#### 3.3.1 A socialisation question: What is the formative influence of our social context?

This study has illustrated that a socialisation approach to Christian formation is certainly not new in the Christian Church. A quick systematisation of Groome's ideas on the major proponents will give us an overview of the development in the thinking of the socialisation theories. The four chosen proponents of the socialisation model may be indicated as follows:

			<b>Bushnell</b>
			Christian nurture through the <i>family</i>
<b>Nelson</b>	<b>Westerhoff III</b>	<b>Coe</b>	
Communication of faith through the Christian <i>community</i>	Christian formation through <i>liturgy</i>	Education by the <i>social ethos</i>	
<b>formation in a relating community</b>	<b>immersion through mystery</b>	<b>transformation for social reconstruction</b>	

#### 3.3.2 Conclusions

What the three main schools of socialisation teach us on faith formation will now be discussed under three headings:

##### 3.3.2.1 The importance of formation in a relating community

The first insight focuses on the important formative influence of the community in which we live. To become Christians, we are required to have socialising interaction with a Christian community which is capable of forming us in such faith. “It is within a Christian social/cultural environment that people come to appropriate the symbols which carry forward the tradition. It is there that they encounter role models, a world view, and a value system that can be interiorized as their own Christian self-identity” (Groome 1980:115).

---

<sup>39</sup> “Authentic dialogue” is what Groome calls Habermas’ “communicative competence.”

Bushnell was one of the first, in modern times, to realise the importance of a relating community for the formation of faith. For him the primary source of Christian nurture is at home. His emphasis on the primary role of parents and the home in Christian formation is a lasting insight to which Christian educators must deliberately attend.

C. Ellis Nelson broadened this accentuation by asserting that the “natural agency” for communicating Christian faith is a Christian community. This is not only the local congregation, it is an association of believers who have permanent face-to-face relationships in a variety of situations and who are stable enough to function as a corporate group in carrying out their mutually developed plans and activities.

For him, “... everything the church does, its whole way of being in the world and its way of being together, is educational. We educate by who we are as a faith community, and the quality of our corporate life together is our primary curriculum” (Groome 1980:119).

This emphasis on the importance of the community of faith might, at first sight, seem to be in tension with the belief that the Scripture alone is authoritative. But, as McGrath (1996:95) recalls: “[T]his principle was never intended by writers such as Luther or Calvin to mean that Scripture is read individualistically. It was not meant to elevate the private judgment of an individual above the communal judgment of the church.”

### ***3.3.2.2 The importance of transformation for social reconstruction***

In the second place, Coe taught us that our concern as religious educators is not just with the Christian family life, but with reform, reconstruction and transformation of the whole social ethos. This gave rise to the movement in Protestant church education which is called “liberal” or “progressive”. This type of education places primary focus on social reconstruction and employs transmissive processes to further the Kingdom of God.

### ***3.3.2.3 The importance of immersion through mystery, art and poetry in faith formation***

With John Westerhoff III we saw the first glimpses of a movement in the socialisation approach that emphasises the importance of immersing people in mystery for faith formation. He is one of the first to call for a shift to a “community of faith-enculturation paradigm”. In doing so he not only tries to incorporate the thoughts of Nelson on the Christian community, but also gives more urgency to Coe’s “social reconstruction”. He uses liturgy, ritual, and symbol to accomplish this middle position.

This is one of his most valuable insights. He especially emphasises the formative influence of the “Church at worship” as it ritualises and celebrates its faith together. By uniting

learning and liturgy, Christian education could be enhanced. More important, our faith could be transmitted to our children.

## 4. The teaching office in the Protestant Reformation

Chapters 2 and 3 systematised the historic developments on epistemology and socialisation and drew conclusions from it. Chapter 4 will now expand these insights to incorporate the thoughts of Martin Luther and John Calvin on the teaching ministry. Richard R Osmer's<sup>40</sup> discussion of the theological understanding of the church's teaching ministry in his book, *A Teachable Spirit* (1990) will be used.

This chapter will establish that from the very beginning of the church's history a tension has existed in the teaching ministry between: traditioning (or as Osmer calls it: structure - the need for institutional roles and agencies by which the church can teach with authority) and reinterpretation (Spirit - the role of the Holy Spirit as the teacher of every individual believer). In our effort to formulate a theory on faith formation, it is important to understand this interdependence and take it into account.

### 4.1 Martin Luther: having a living witness to the gospel

The Reformers' debate with Rome was a debate over the Teaching Authority. They wanted to redefine the teaching office. "...the Reformers rejected the authority of the *magisterium*, arguing that it usurped prerogatives that belong to Christ and Christ alone" (Osmer 1990:84). How did Reformers think about teaching authority?

Luther and Calvin had a complex understanding of the relationship between structure and Spirit. "No sooner had Luther and Calvin begun to extricate themselves from Roman authority than they were faced with the Anabaptists and their emphasis on the unmediated role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life. In the Reformers' rejection of this (Roman) form of Christianity, they were forced to reaffirm the relative importance of councils, church tradition, the ordained ministry, and theological doctrines and confessions" (Osmer 1990:86). Teaching was a question of keeping together traditioning and reinterpretation.

To keep these together, Luther considered multiple authorities in the teaching office: Scripture, tradition, ministerial office, individual conscience, and church councils. Osmer (1990:87), however, declares that the "... relative weight assigned to each of these authorities ... shifted markedly over the course of his reform." He indicates how over time the priority of the Scripture among the various authorities in the life of the church grew in Luther's thought. By 1519 "... the weight within Luther's consensus of authorities had

---

<sup>40</sup> Osmer is a professor of Christian education at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, NY.

shifted towards scripture" (Osmer 1990:89). The pope, church councils, and priests all had their authority *within* the Word.

For the question of how the normative beliefs and practices of the church are determined and reinterpreted, Luther went back to the absolute priority of the gospel in the Christian life. His theology of the cross places all human wisdom and authority, including that of the church, in a subordinate position to the gospel. The church's teaching authority must reflect the *theologia crucis*.

Luther sees the primary function of the teaching office as communication of the gospel, hence he writes: "Therefore if we teach anything contrary to the Word of God, neither I nor the church nor the fathers nor the apostles nor even an angel from heaven should be believed ... No one likes to say that the church is in error; and yet, if the church teaches anything in addition or contrary to the Word of God, one must say that it is in error" (Osmer 1990:93).

There is in Luther's mind a difference between the well-being (*bene esse*) and the essential being (*esse*) of the church. Human tradition is necessary for the first but not part of the second. The church can never claim for itself the infallibility found in the Roman magisterium. "Its doctrinal formulations, moral teachings, and ecclesiastical structures are all to be clearly distinguished from the gospel itself" (Osmer 1990:93).

The church has a difficult task: "For the church to exist, it must teach. It must test its present proclamation against the gospel again and again." It must hand down an interpreted tradition to the next generation, but it must also engage in new issues of the day. "The church must teach or it will die" (Osmer 1990:93). But teaching means traditioning *and* reinterpretation.

To understand Luther's thoughts on the teaching office, one must come to terms with his understanding of the authority of Scripture. "Firstly, what is truly authoritative about Scripture is its material content, its witness to the gospel. Secondly, by basing the authority of Scripture on its gospel content and arguing that the gospel was and is primarily a living word of proclamation, Luther emphasised what we might call today the existentiality of Scripture" (Osmer 1990:95).

The teaching office must thus ensure that the church is a living witness to the gospel. This Luther wishes to achieve through penultimate authorities in the church's life. The Scripture has a unique kind of authority for Luther. All other authorities have the task as living witnesses to the gospel, only in that they are based on Scripture. Even though Luther does not work with a divine blueprint, he does work with basic principles to grasp what kind of teaching authority these subordinate offices and structures possess.



Osmer (190:98), describes Luther as "a conciliarist, though a disillusioned one". He saw church councils as representative bodies that were granted real but fallible authority in defining the church's teachings. "These multiple teaching authorities are best pictured as functioning within a dialogical model of teaching office. No single authority can lay exclusive claim to the definitive conservation and interpretation of Scripture. As each attempts to teach, it must confront other authorities in the church which can correct, expand and confirm its understanding of Christian teaching." And all must base their authority "on the conformity of their teaching to Scripture". Luther's qualified conciliarism may be seen in the more important teaching authorities in his thought.

#### **4.1.1 Multiple teaching authorities for the conservation and interpretation of Scripture**

Luther ascribes a unique authority to Scripture and argues that all other authorities in the church's teaching ministry are penultimate in comparison. In so doing, Luther rejects all traditions and authorities that claim a salvific function. But now the question arises: What if there is disagreement in the church as to the meaning of the gospel?

Now is the time to compare Luther and Groome, and verify they are not that far apart in their thinking. What practice did Luther use to decide on a theological position that should prevail in a given congregation?

Osmer (1990:96), argues that Luther had to face such questions as the above, in the newly emerging Reformation church. And it was "... one thing to argue that the church's teaching ministry is primarily charged with the task of ensuring the preaching and teaching of the gospel. It is quite another to sort out how this is best done in the actual structures of the church's life."

Luther chose to give the gospel back to the church. The gospel would be protected by a number of penultimate authorities, such as: church councils, the consensus of tradition, office-bearers, the congregation, theological doctrines, and individual conscience. "These multiple teaching authorities are best pictured as functioning within a dialogical model of the teaching office. No single authority can lay exclusive claim to the definitive conservation and interpretation of Scripture. As each attempts to teach, it must confront other authorities in the church which can correct, expand, and confirm its understanding of the Christian teaching. All must base their authority on the conformity of their teaching to Scripture."

Osmer (1990:98), names the following as teaching authorities in Luther's thought: Councils (which are representative of the church as a whole), consensus of the church tradition, theology (for the clarification and interpretation of the teachings of Scripture)

and doctrine, congregations (for teaching the basic beliefs of the church and evaluating<sup>41</sup> the teachings offered by other ecclesiastic offices and agencies), ministers<sup>42</sup>, and individual Christians.

Luther never identified Christian liberty with modern individualism. The priesthood of all believers gave people the task of ministry for others. Individuals are not their own priests, directly related to God. "At no point are individuals abandoned to their own resources, including their consciences, to determine Christian truth. They are situated in a concrete fellowship of believers that is itself open to an ongoing interchange with past and present church councils, the inherited catholic tradition of the church, and office-bearers who are bound to the gospel (Osmer 1990:104).

This again underlines the point Groome makes against a banking theory of education in favour of a theory of faith formation in which dialogue is important.

We have seen that the unique authority that Luther ascribes to Scripture does not rule out the penultimate authorities in the church's life. "The church's authority is dispersed and relativized, but it is not thereby negated" (Osmer 1990:106).

The theory of this study will refer later to certain themes found in Luther's thought. The theory will try to keep the individual believer (situated among a concrete fellowship of believers) in dialogue with a tradition of biblical interpretation and agencies that represent the catholic sense of the church.

---

<sup>41</sup> This was especially true during the early phases of the newly emerging Reformation churches. In this transitional period priests continued to hold jurisdiction in certain areas. Luther wrote: "Bishops, pope, scholars, and everyone have power to teach, but the sheep should judge whether they are teaching Christ's voice or the voice of strangers ... That is why we let bishops and councils conclude and establish whatever they want; but if we have God's Word on our side it should be up to us, and not them, to decide whether it is right or wrong, and they should yield to us and obey our word" (in Osmer 1990:101).

<sup>42</sup> Osmer (1990:103) points out that there is a tension in Luther's depiction of the authority of office-bearers in relation to the authority of the congregation. "Seemingly, strict conciliarism is qualified by emphasis on the direct institution of the office of ministry (by Christ NWS). Delegation of authority gives way to a succession of apostolic witnesses who are bound to the gospel of Christ. This is a healthy tension, however, protecting against the tendency of strict congregationalism to make the minister a mere functionary of the people and proclivity of a hierarchical ministry to destroy the authority of the congregation."

#### **4.2 John Calvin: having a teaching role in society**

Calvin had an even stronger, more active, understanding of the church's teaching ministry than Luther. For him it had to assist the elect "... in appropriating their salvation and ordering their lives according to the pattern of the law" (Osmer 1990:108). He even saw the church as having a teaching role in society. While formulating educational institutions and practices for both the church and the general population he, struggled to find a way between the subjectivity of individualism and authoritarianism.

"Calvin's understanding of the authority of Scripture in the life of the church is virtually identical with Luther's on a general level. ... From beginning to end, he believes, the teaching of the church are bound to the authority of Scripture. ... The power of the church, as such, is 'enclosed' within God's word. ... Calvin binds the work of the Holy Spirit to Scripture and not to particular church structures and offices" (Osmer 1990:109).

For Calvin Word and Spirit are bound inextricably together. "If the Holy Spirit is the primary teacher of the church, the written word is its basic subject matter" (Osmer 1990:110). Calvin binds both the authority of the Holy Spirit and all ecclesiastical structures to the written word<sup>43</sup>.

Osmer (1990:111) indicates that Calvin's understanding of Scripture focuses primarily on its salvific function, not its formal authority as an inspired document. "Its teachings are given with the purpose of transforming the sinful orientation of the human heart and assisting the elect in recognizing that God holds a rightful position of sovereignty over every aspect of their lives."

This point is again confirmed by Groome. Teaching is not just about the cognitive dimension of faith. "Knowledge of God is always present as part of a transformation of the basic trusts and loyalties governing a person's pattern of life" (Osmer 1990:112).

The teaching office is linked to church power and authority in general. Calvin understands the *invisible* church as the true (one, holy, apostolic and universal) church. This however does not lead him to a denigration of the *visible* church. The visible church is the "mother" of believers, having real, though limited, authority. "Calvin identifies three forms of authority in the church: the power to teach doctrine, to legislate laws regulating

---

<sup>43</sup> Here Calvin differs from Luther in that he is more reticent to posit so absolutely a canon within a canon. His affirmation of Scripture as a whole is a function of a broader theological conviction "... that God accommodates to a sinful, finite humanity in different ways during different ages but remains the self-same triune God" (Osmer 1990:111).

the church's life, and to carry out church discipline" (Osmer 1990:112). The teaching office goes with the first form of authority.

God chose to accommodate finite, sinful humanity to "teach us through human means" rather than "to thunder at us and drive us away" (Osmer 1990:113). God "scaled down" his rhetoric to human capacity and need. "Scripture is one form of accommodation. The church is another." The church is God's chosen means of grace, forgiveness and sanctification. According to Osmer (1990:113), the authority of the church possesses four characteristics:

- 1) Derived authority: God calls and uses the church as an instrument. The church is a means of divine accommodation and its authority is bound to the teachings of Scripture.
- 2) Fallible authority: Though God uses human words and agencies, they remain finite and sinful. The treasure of the gospel is preserved in an earthly vessel. Calvin maintains the distinction between the church and God.
- 3) Dispersed authority: "Calvin is reticent to place exclusive authority in any single agency or office. ... As he puts it, 'Do you see how he assigns to each member a certain measure, and a definite and limited function, in order that perfection of grace as well as the supreme power of governing may remain with Christ alone?' " (Osmer 1990:114).
- 4) Real authority: Despite the above qualifications certain offices and agencies must be acknowledged by the members as a genuine expression of God's love and care for the church. Ordained offices and agencies are to be taken very, very seriously. "Their authority is real, for 'although God's power is not bound to outward means, he has nonetheless bound us to this ordinary manner of teaching' " (Osmer 1990:114).

#### **4.2.1 The teaching office**

For Calvin the teaching ministry (as one facet of the church's general power and authority) is determined by the functions he ascribes to the rest of the church. He describes the specific tasks of the church's teaching ministry as twofold, namely

- 1) the authority to lay down articles of faith and
- 2) the authority to interpret these articles.

This study started out by affirming the concept that Calvin thought of the church primarily as a teacher. He frequently uses teaching-learning imagery to describe the nature of the church - the mother of believers. The visible church is our mother because "... there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angel" (Calvin in Osmer 1990:115).

Not only the church, but also God is presented as being like a teacher. "In describing both God and the church in terms of teaching-learning imagery, Calvin goes far beyond a depiction of the teaching ministry of the church per se. His use of this sort of imagery so frequently in his writings, however, underscores the importance he attaches to this particular ministry" (Osmer 1990:116).

In the *Institutes* he discusses two agencies of the teaching office in depth - ordained ministers and church councils. Both of these he qualifies as being real, derivative, fallible and dispersed.

Ministers and church councils are only two of the authorities that have important roles to play in the church's determination of its normative beliefs and practices, and its reinterpretation of these beliefs and practices through the ages. Congregations, theologians, individual conscience, and church tradition are also important. But none can be raised to a position that rivals the Bible. They are all dependent on their faithfulness to Scripture. "For this reason the teaching office must include a constellation of authorities functioning at various levels of the church's life. ... frequently it is out of the tension between the various partners in the church's teaching office that the truth emerges" (Osmer 1990:120)

#### *4.2.1.1 The Academy of Geneva and the education of the public*

Calvin did not only believe in the teaching ministry, he also worked tirelessly to develop church (and other) structures to carry out the teaching ministry. Because Calvin believed that "sound instruction of the laity in Christian doctrine was a key to the success of the Reformation" (Osmer 1990:123), he envisioned a school that would be open to all children. For many years he pressed for a school of high quality in Geneva.

The Academy of Geneva opened on 16 March 1559, with Theodore Beza as rector. For Calvin the doctors of the school continued to be regarded as representatives of the church, although the curriculum of the Academy was thoroughly humanistic, built on the insights of arts and sciences.

At no point, however, "... does Calvin ascribe the same kind of authority to the insights of the arts and sciences as he grants to Scripture and Christian doctrine. ... It is Scripture, and Scripture alone, that can provide true knowledge of God and the world in relation to God" (Osmer 1990:127). This was true for Calvin on the church's teaching of its own members as well as the general education of the population of the city.

Calvin's long-term insistence on the church's support of and involvement in the general education of the Geneva population challenges us in our thinking on Christian education. Calvin saw the knowledge given in Jesus as the foundation of the Academy while at the

same time the Academy drew on humanistic education to inform the school's curriculum. This, however, seems an impossible educational ideal in a pluralistic society in which public schools must be able to accommodate many different religions.

“Nonetheless, Calvin's vision of a school of general education in which the knowledge given in Christ holds a preeminent position challenges the contemporary teaching office to broaden its horizons beyond an exclusive concern for the education that takes place in the church. In Calvin's view the church's teaching ministry is involved in the task of ordering the patterns of life in society beyond the church” (Osmer 1990:128). To hold on to this idea, the proposed model of this study keeps formation (the community) and transformation (social reconstruction) in tension with the teaching that takes place in the classroom setting. Our cultural setting is quite different than the one in which Calvin worked, but “... there can be little question that the contemporary teaching office has unwittingly accepted the role assigned it by a society in which religion is privatized” (Osmer 1990:128). One of the challenges before the mainline churches in South Africa, is to go beyond this position with regard to the education of the public.

#### ***4.2.1.2 Catechetical instruction in the church***

Calvin viewed the role of catechetical instruction as an “elementary form of teaching” for the church as a whole. He saw his initial work in the *Institutes* as an exercise in teaching and wrote it “especially for our French countrymen, very many whom I knew to be hungering and thirsting for Christ” (Calvin in Osmer 1990:129). Furthermore, he was the author of two catechisms and wrote much about the practice of catechetical instruction. Osmer takes three themes from this body of work:

1) “Catechetical instruction plays a significant role in the teaching office's attempt to maintain unity both in the congregation and among the churches, providing all members with a common set of beliefs. It should not be viewed strictly in terms of its role in the individual's faith. It has a unifying function in the church's life.”

Osmer (1990:133) proves convincingly that Calvin placed great emphasis on the unity of belief among the faithful. Catechetical instruction affords a common language and a set of theological convictions by which the church can order its life. This tension between personal appropriation of faith and unity in a congregation must be taken seriously in our modern individualistic culture.

2) “Catechetical instruction is necessary for the preservation of sound, evangelical doctrine in the church. It allows individuals and congregations to discern and resist heretical thinking.”

Instruction was important for Calvin to “maintain the people in purity of doctrine” and “so that evangelical doctrine is not left to decay” (Calvin in Osmer 1990:131).

Here it is clear that the basic beliefs of the church are normative and that every member must be taught “a brief and simple summary of the Christian faith<sup>44</sup>” (Calvin in Osmer 1990:131). This is such an important insight that in any theory on faith formation it should be considered pivotal. This basic truth can be kept in constant focus by acknowledging and practising the importance of *remembrance of tradition*.

This remembrance of tradition is not a one-way process. The second catechism Calvin wrote in 1541 had a question-answer format. This was more than an exercise in rote memorisation. It had to be a living dialogue between minister and student on the basic beliefs of the church.

3) “The teaching of the catechism serves as a means of grace, enabling baptized children to appropriate personally the promises made on their behalf at baptism and initiating them into the ongoing process of sanctification that is nurtured through their participation in the word and sacraments of the church during their lives.”

Calvin saw “the catechetical instruction of children” as one of the four<sup>45</sup> components necessary to reform the Genevan church. Children were initiated in the fundamentals of Christian religion because each “... ought to make a confession of their faith to the Church for if we truly believe with the heart, it is right that we ought also confess with the mouth to that salvation which we believe” (Calvin in Osmer 1990:130). Although baptised children are considered members of the covenant community, their baptism does not preclude their making a personal confession of faith to the church. Calvin links catechetical instruction to the baptism of infants. All parents are thus expected to teach their children the catechism and present them to the minister for instruction and examination.

#### **4.2.2 Three central tasks of the teaching office**

The conclusion Osmer draws from the work of Luther and Calvin is that the teaching office of the church has three central tasks:

1) *Transmission*: the determination of the normative beliefs and practices of the church;

---

<sup>44</sup> For this purpose Calvin set out writing a catechism, which was published in French in 1537.

<sup>45</sup> The other are “the singing of psalms in congregational worship, the discipline of excommunication, and the improvement of regulations governing marriage” (Osmer 1990:130).

2) *Reinterpretation*: the reinterpretation of these beliefs and practices in shifting cultural and historical contexts; and

3) *Educational institutionalisation*: the formation of appropriate educational institutions, processes, and material that can teach each new generation and help them deepen their faith as they matures and ages.

#### ***4.2.2.1 Transmission: determining the normative beliefs and practices***

The first task in faith formation is the determination of the church's normative beliefs and practices. This involves mainly the transmission and preservation of the core elements of the heritage of a church community.

Osmer (1990:16), declares that "... every community is bound together by a complex set of social definitions, norms, and practices by which its members can interpret the world and act in it." When a community's identity is threatened the church attempts to lift up and give specification to these largely unconscious beliefs and practices.

This does not happen only in times of crises. "It also occurs in conjunction with the projection of the *paideia* informing the educational efforts of a given community. .. Under the impression of its *paideia*, a community decides the substance and the process of its educational activities" (Osmer 1990:16).

The first function of faith formation is the determination and transmission of the normative expressions of the past by which the church has identified itself as a community. This is what Groome calls the remembrance of tradition.

#### ***4.2.2.2 Reinterpretation of normative beliefs and practices.***

Faith formation is never merely a repetition of the past in the present. The church's normative beliefs and practices are reinterpreted in the light of a shifting cultural and historic context. "The tradition is preserved by extending it into the present" (Osmer 1990:17).

Transmission and reinterpretation are not easily separated. In the transmission there is always a form of selection involved. "In a sense, the first task is concerned with maintenance of the integrity of the original witness in the church. The second task focuses on intelligibility, setting forth the faith in ways that are understandable and transformational in vastly different historical settings" (Osmer 1990:17).

A method for faith formation must be able to keep together the tension inherent between efforts to transmit and preserve the normative expressions of the community's faith and the reinterpretive task of the church. The tension comes from the fact that reinterpretation



frequently involves “stretching the inherited tradition in ways that seems to threaten continuity with the past” (Osmer 1990:18). This innovation in theological language, worship, and social relationships is important, for the now “official teachings” are all reinterpretations of faith.

#### ***4.2.2.3 Institutionalisation: forming the means of education***

The third task of the teaching functions is the formation and sustenance of educational institutions, processes, and curricula. This is more than educational institutions and material. It is also, for instance, a denomination's struggle with a moral issue.

In describing the formation and sustenance of educational institutions, processes, and curriculum, Osmer (1990:18-19) distinguishes between “education” and “teaching”.

Education is, for Osmer (1990:19), a community's systematic and intentional<sup>46</sup> effort to transmit and evoke knowledge, attitudes, values and skills. This body of complex, interrelated information, skills and attitudes, that must be mastered has traditionally been referred to as an educational curriculum. This necessitates an organisation of institutions, material, and persons that projects an unfolding course of study over time.

For this reason, education is thus normative, because only certain knowledge, skills, values and attitudes are deemed worthwhile. Because the church chooses to invest its resources in some of these, while ignoring others, it inevitably participates in a political activity. Osmer (1990:20), reminds us that we “... must come to grips with the institutional forms and processes by which a given church or denomination determines the central foci of its educational ministry and the appropriate processes for teaching and learning. The voices of some are heard; the voices of others are not.”

Osmer (1990:21), uses the word teaching in a more limited sense, to focus on those specific occasions through which education takes place. “Teaching always involves particular people in specific settings. It is an event, not an ongoing process or structure. ... At the heart of teaching is an increase in understanding of the subject matter on the part of the student.” Obviously understanding should not be viewed in a narrow intellectual sense.

### ***4.3 The tension between structure and Spirit***

In examining the theology of the two central figures of the Protestant Reformation, we discovered patterns of thought and action, that have something to say on maintaining

---

<sup>46</sup> The words 'systematic' and 'intentional' distinguish education from socialisation or enculturation.

Protestant churches today. We saw that from the very beginning of the church's life, a tension has existed in the teaching ministry between structure (placing emphasis on the need for authoritative teaching by the church) and Spirit (focusing on the reinterpretation of tradition by every individual believer). Osmer (1990:64) reminds us that "the teaching office of the church has worked best when it has been able to balance both these emphases." This too should be done in a theory on faith formation.

#### **4.3.1 Different centres of authority within the church**

Traditioning and reinterpretation should be carried out by various centres of authority. Osmer (1990:176-211) notes that this is taking place at three levels:

- a) Congregations: centres of practical theological reflection and lay education
- b) Representative bodies and leaders: centres of teaching and education on behalf of the denomination as a whole
- c) Seminaries and professional theologians: centres of scholarly inquiry and clergy education

The focus of this study is on the first level, while remembering that the other two are just as important. To a large extent faith formation is carried out on a congregational level. It is there that Christians have to make the link between theology and ethics and life. And, as Osmer (1990:175) says, if "... Christians do not gain a sense of transforming, dynamic quality of Christian life at this level, it is highly unlikely that they will gain it from denominational leaders or professional theologians."

He pleads that the congregation must become a center of practical theological discourse. "It must be a place where Scripture and theology are taught in such a manner that they become an important part of the interpretive framework that persons use to make sense of their lives and the surrounding world" (Osmer 1990:176). For him the unrecognised genius of the mainline churches' Reformation heritage, is the way that congregations are located within a constellation of teaching authorities. Their heritage recognises the dangers inherent in extreme forms of both congregationalism and individualism. These are brought into dialogue with centres of teaching authority that can sustain, moderate and even correct them.

"At the heart of the great Reformers' theologies was an affirmation of the absolute priority of the gospel. The good news of God's gratuitous mercy was revealed in Jesus Christ standing at the beginning and the end of the Christian life. Human beings exist in rebellion against God and can only be restored to a relationship with their maker through the forgiveness won in the life, death, and resurrection of the Mediator, Jesus Christ. The foundation of the Christian life, thus, is the unmerited, alien righteousness that is freely

given to a sinful humanity in Jesus Christ. ... Second in importance in ...(their) thought is the authority of Scripture...(that) stands in a closer relationship to the source of faith than any other authority in the church" (Osmer 1990:177).

However, the teaching office is not reduced to repeating the words of the Bible in a mechanical fashion. There is a legitimate place for the teaching authority in the church for an ongoing interpretation of Scripture from age to age. But, the authorities who carry out the church's teaching ministry are human. "No authority in the church can claim the status that belong to the gospel and Scripture alone. All church authority is human and, as such, is fallible and subject to corruption" (Osmer 1990:177). Therefore the Reformers advocated multiple offices and agencies at various levels of church life for the teaching office.

Their understanding has much to teach contemporary mainline Protestantism. According to Osmer (1990:178), it points to a third way beyond modern individualism and counter-modern authoritarianism: "If mainline Protestantism were to create an educational ecology in which various centers carry out vital teaching informed by an ongoing dialogue between the academy, congregations, and representative bodies and leaders, it might well be that genuine consensus would emerge. A compelling vision of Christian life might begin to take shape, a vision of what it means to be a Christian and a community of faith in the contemporary world. Teaching and consensus go hand in hand. Only with the recovery of the teaching vocation of various centers of church life will the realization of common accord in the mainline churches be a possibility" (Osmer 1990:181).

#### **4.3.2 The congregation as center for practical theological reflection**

What then does congregations do for the traditioning and reinterpretation of faith? For Osmer (1990:182), there is a tension found in Calvin's thought on the role of congregations. On the one hand, congregations hold an important position of unique importance in the Christian life. They are never mere subdivisions or cells of the real church. It is here that the teaching of the gospel takes place. "In its own particular situation, it is the church in its fullness, containing all that is necessary for salvation; the preaching and teaching of the gospel, baptism, the Lord's supper, and different ministries. On the other hand, congregations are located within a constellation of church structures and roles that represent the church as a whole."

The congregation must thus make an important contribution to the traditioning and reinterpretation of faith, while honoring the catholicity of faith as expression is given to this by other centres of teaching authority in the church's life.

One of the most important tasks facing ministers who wish to help their congregations become centres of traditioning and reinterpretation, is to understand the specific culture of the church: such as unique social practices, language, sacred symbols, sense of time, sacred space, and norms. Understanding the narrative structure of congregational culture is a crucial part of leading a community, because members reflect within the linguistic and conceptual parameters of their culture.

This culture can, however, also distort and particularise the gospel. Congregations are not always willing to struggle with socioethical imperatives that call prevailing norms into question. Attitudes of racism and sexism are frequently interwoven into the congregation's culture. Their traditioning and reinterpretation must therefore always be supported, challenged, and even corrected by a more catholic vision of Christianity<sup>47</sup>.

Up to this point in the study, history have taught us three important lessons on faith formation:

The epistemological debate have taught us, in the first place, the danger of working with a dualism between facts and experience. "There exists no neutral reason that can decide impartially on the truth or falsehood of the Christian gospel. On the contrary, if it is true that Jesus is the Word made flesh, then to know Jesus must be the basis for all true knowledge" (Newbigin 1995:96).

This relationship fosters knowledge in three important ways; a) through an active *remembrance* of tradition, b) through an *engagement of people as agent-subjects-in-relation*ship, and c) through *mystery*, art and poetry.

In the second instance the sociological debate pointed out the critical interaction that must be fostered between participants and their socio-cultural environment. This must happen on three fronts: formation within a relating community, transformation for social reconstruction, and immersion through *mystery*, art and poetry.

In the last instance the overview of Luther and Calvin reminded us that faith formation should be able to balance traditioning and reinterpretation. It became clear that faith formation involves two tasks. The first is the determination, transmission and preservation of the core elements of the heritage of a church. The second is the reinterpretation of these normative beliefs and practices in the light of shifting cultural and historical contexts.

---

<sup>47</sup>This has important implications for the process of unification between the Dutch Reformed Church and the Uniting Reformed Church. It is not a process that can be left to the congregations' own doing.

It was also noted that transmission and reinterpretation are not easily separated. Only a theory that can balance these tensions, will lead to the formation of faith.

#### **4.4 A participative and dialogical pedagogy: Shared Christian Praxis**

Groome's Shared Christian Praxis is a meta-approach. It is an overarching perspective and mode for proceeding that may be readily adapted to a great variety of teaching/learning occasions and ministerial tasks. His method will now be discussed in the following few pages. The aim of this discussion is to highlight the correlation and differences between his method and the method that will be proposed in the next chapter.

##### **Focusing activity**

"The focusing activity turns people to their own "being" in place and time, to their present praxis, and establishes a focus for the curriculum. Typically it does this most effectively by engaging participants with shared focus in a generative theme for the teaching/learning event. It may do this by sponsoring a present action of it or by turning them toward some aspect of their historical reality in the world to recognize the theme as it is operative in present praxis. The focusing activity may also turn participants to present praxis through an engaging symbol so that as people look through it they begin to recognize a particular aspect of their own and/or their society's praxis. This likely leads on to a generative theme or the symbol can continue to serve the function throughout the event" (Groome 1991:155).

##### **1: Naming/expressing present praxis**

Movement 1 invites participants to "name" or express in some forms their own and/or society's "present action", typically of a generative theme or around an engaging symbol, as they participate in and experience that praxis in their historical context. Depending on the focused theme, this expression of consciousness of present action varies in both content and form.

"In content, participants can depict how the theme is being lived or produced, dealt with or realised, "going on" or "being done" in their own or in society's praxis; they can express their sentiments, attitudes, intuitions, or feelings toward it, the operative values, meaning, and beliefs they see in present praxis of the theme, their perceptions and assessments of it, their commitments regarding it, and so on. In form, present action can be named or expressed through a recognizable activity, in making and describing, in symbolizing, speaking, writing, gesturing, miming, dancing, that is, by any form of human expression. As people bring their conscious and historical engagement with a generative theme to

expression - an aspect of their present praxis - they fulfill the intent of movement 1" (Groome 1991:175).

## 2: Critical reflection on present action

Movement 2 encourages "critical reflection" by participants on what was expressed as "present action" in Movement 1. Critical reflection can engage people in any or all the activities of critical and social reasoning, analytical and social remembering, creative and social imagining. The intent is to deepen the reflective moment and bring participants to a critical consciousness of present praxis; its reasons, interests, assumptions, prejudices, and ideologies (reason); its socio-historical and biographic sources (memory); its intended, likely, and preferred consequences (imagination).

Movement 2 enables participants to come to a critical appropriation of present praxis in their "place" and "time" and, metaphorically, to share in dialogue their own "stories" and "visions" (Groome 1991:187).

## 3: Making accessible Christian story and vision

"The third movement makes accessible expressions of Christian Story and Vision as appropriate to the generative theme or symbol of the learning event. Its Story symbolises the faith life of the Christian community over history and in present, as expressed through Scripture, traditions, liturgies, and so forth. Its Vision reflects the promises and demands that arise from the Story to empower and mandate Christians to live now for the coming of God's reign for all creation (Groome 1991:215)."

## 4: Dialectical hermeneutic to appropriate Christian story/vision to participants' story/vision

"In movement 4 participants place their critical understanding of present praxis around a generative theme or symbol (movements 1 and 2) in dialectical hermeneutics with Christian Story/Vision (movement 3). In the fullest expression of its dynamic, participants ask, How does this Story/Vision affirm, question, and call us beyond present praxis? And, conversely, How does present praxis affirm and critically appropriate the version of Story/Vision made accessible in movement 3, and how are we to live more faithful towards the vision of God's reign?

Such dialectical hermeneutics between the two sources of Christian faith conation/wisdom (present praxis and Christian Story/Vision) enable participants to appropriate the community Story/Vision to their own lives and contexts, to know it for themselves through judgment, and thus to make it their own as agent-subjects in the larger Christian community and in the world" (Groome 1991:249).

## 5: Decision/response for lived Christian faith

"Movement 5 offers participants an explicit opportunity for making decisions about how to live Christian faith in the world. In keeping with a holistic understanding of Christian faith and of conation or wisdom therein that engages people's whole "being" in "place" and "time" towards "truth" that is cognitive, relational, and moral, responses chosen by participants, depending on generative theme or symbol, context, and so on, can be primarily or variously cognitive, affective, and behavioral and may pertain to personal, interpersonal, or social/political levels of their lives. Decisions too may be personal ones by each participant or be made by consensus of the learning community. Whatever the form or level of response invited, the practical intent of the dialogue in movement 5 is to enable participants, by God's grace working through their own discernment and volition, to make historical choices about the praxis of Christian faith in the world. As long as they maintain continuity with the broader teaching/learning community - the church - and are creative of the Vision of God's reign, they are likely to be appropriate decisions for lived Christian faith."

Groome's shared praxis is more an approach, or a "way of being with people", than a pedagogical method. It should not be reduced to the mechanics of the Movements, it is more a style of human encounter that honours and engages people in dialogue about their lives. It has the potential of many functions for the Christian ministry in general and for many particular functions of ministry. The last part of sharing faith places the shared praxis approach in dialogue with ministry, liturgical planning and preaching, ministry for justice and peace and pastoral counselling.

For Groome (1991:296), all Christian ministry, in one way or another, "is a service that mediates between the human condition and God's saving will for the world, between present praxis and Christian Story/Vision. Shared Christian praxis is a intentional procedure designed precisely to facilitate such mediation. ... it can also help ministers to be intentional and responsible about the educational aspect of all ministry."

We are on our way to structures which form Christian faith. Why then did we begin with this purpose? Hanson (1987:468) states: "For whenever and wherever God's people has been faithful to the calling, it has allowed its communal structures to emerge from its central mission of embodying the qualities of God's righteousness and compassion in all aspects of its life. That is to say, the specific forms giving structure and order to the common life of the faithful have been inferred from their experience of God's gracious initiative and have arisen as an aspect of the response deemed appropriate and fitting for those acknowledging the gift character of their life together."

Form follows purpose. If we want to know how to form faith we must know what our purpose is and what lived Christian faith involves.



## 5. Towards a constructive proposal

This Chapter will put forward a constructive proposal for the formation of faith. This will be accomplished through a dialogue between epistemology, socialisation, and educational methods. Here the writer formulates a broad theory on faith formation and transformation based on the readings thus far.

This Chapter describes, under three headings, an educational method that will form people that are religious, in a Christian way. The first part underlines the importance of the interdependence between *traditioning* and *reinterpretation*. The middle section suggests five movements in education which will facilitate faith formation. And the last reminds us of the importance of balance between various formative processes.

This study is called *Traditioning and Reinterpretation*. The constructive proposal begins by arguing the interdependence of these two formative processes.

### 5.1 Traditioning and reinterpretation

There is a popular slogan in the European Reformed tradition: *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda* (The church reformed and always to be reformed.) Purdy (1985: 7) reminds us, "The verb is passive. The church is the object, not the subject of reform." The completion of the slogan, universally understood, is found in words often printed as a part of it: 'according to the Word of God' (*secundum verbum Dei*). This is the essence of *traditioning* and *reinterpretation*.

In Chapter 4 it was argued that the Reformers had a complex understanding of the relationship between traditioning and reinterpretation. It became apparent that teaching was a question of keeping these two together.

Luther gave the gospel back to the church and protected it by a number of penultimate authorities, such as church councils, the consensus of tradition, office-bearers, the congregation, theological doctrines, and individual conscience. Within these various authorities the tension between traditioning and reinterpretation may be retained.

Calvin had an even stronger, more active understanding of the church's teaching ministry. He, too, struggled to find a way between the subjectivity of individualism and authoritarianism. For him the tasks of the teaching ministry of the church was twofold: 1) The authority to lay down articles of faith and 2) the authority to interpret these articles.

He kept these together in his discussion of catechetical instruction. For him it was apparent that the basic beliefs of the church were normative and that every member had to be taught a brief summary of the Christian faith. This basic truth must be kept in constant

focus by acknowledging and practising the importance of *remembrance of tradition*. This, however, is more than an exercise in rote memorisation. It should be a living dialogue between minister and student on the basic beliefs of the church.

It followed that faith formation involved two tasks. The first is the determination, transmission and preservation of the core elements of the heritage of a church. The second is the reinterpretation of these normative beliefs and practices in the light of shifting cultural and historical contexts. It was also noted that transmission and reinterpretation could not be separated easily. In transmission there is always a form of selection involved.

Chapter 4 concluded that any theory for faith formation should be able to keep the tension together which is inherent between efforts to transmit and preserve the normative expressions of the community's faith and the reinterpetive task of the church.

Under *traditioning* is understood that there must be a transmission of what has been received to facilitate faith formation. Traditioning means helping people to comprehend what is already given in the tradition. It would, however, be a mistake to think of faith formation only as traditioning; it asks for more, it asks for *reinterpretation*. This means a process of interpreting of the tradition that is being received. Then education is an act of creation as well as re-creation. The transformation of the tradition is then seen as an essential part of the tradition itself. It is the process of discerning the will of God in the present situation, in view of the tradition. Faith formation needs a hermeneutic of life situations within the context of interpreting the Story and the hope of the tradition; and within an ongoing covenantal relationship.

#### **5.1.1 Traditioning: formative education**

The first function of faith formation is to determine and transmit of the church's normative beliefs and practices. "The foundational teachings of congregational education are not the creative invention of each congregation or minister" (Osmer 1990:184).

Osmer (1990:185), uses catechetical instruction as an example of the congregation's role in the reception and transmission of the church's normative beliefs and practices. The church "... does not write the catechism but sees to it that the beliefs the catechism articulates take hold in the lives of those receiving instruction. Its task is to hand on the faith, channeling its creativity into forming teaching approaches that allow personal appropriation to take place, not into the invention of the theological substance of what is being taught. ... In a very real sense, the congregation has the responsibility of teaching its children, youth, and adults the normative beliefs and moral perspectives of its

denominational heritage, making sure that all church members understand the difference between sound Christian doctrine and popular culture."

Astley (1994:78) adopts a useful distinction (which he gets from McKenzie), between formative education and critical education. Formative education aims "principally at the formation of the learner ... towards the reception of educational givens. ... Formation is conceived here as a process by which a learner is shaped by an educator according to some a priori ideal or model." Critical education, on the other hand, is organised so as to maximise evaluative thinking on the part of the learners.

The Reformers' emphasis on traditioning underlines the importance of formative education. Astley (1994:79), describes formative education as "... systematized, instructional enculturation (the learning of the culture into which one is born) or acculturation (learning aspects of a 'new' culture), where the stress is on the learner's acquiescence in, and acceptance of, society's ways."

Formative education, when using Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive educational objectives, results in *knowledge* (as measured by recall of material taught), *comprehension* (understanding what is being communicated) and *application* (of learning to other areas). Formative education shapes or 'forms' the learner in religion, "rather than enabling her to analyze and evaluate it" (Astley 1994:84,85).

For Astley (1994:85), formative education is or should be "... whole person education ... [it] forms not only cognitions in the learner, but also attitudes, dispositions, values, emotions and lifestyle as both products and processes. It does this in a receptive, uncritical way. In Christian religious education these learning outcomes include the formed affections and dispositions to overt behavior of the Christian, which many would regard as the most important Christian learning outcomes."

The last word on traditioning belongs to G.K. Chesterton (in Harris 1998:78), when he defines tradition as the extension of a franchise. "Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors .... Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about."

### **5.1.2 Reinterpretation: critical education**

The transmission of faith is, however, always a dialogical process, not a unidirectional process from the other centres of teaching down to the congregation. It is therefore important for the congregation to also reinterpret these beliefs in a shifting cultural and historical context (See Moore 1991: *Education for Continuity and Change*).

The activity of particularising the gospel to the specific culture of each congregation is one of the most important sources of innovation in the church. In this way new forms of

Christian life emerge and old issues reappear that once were alive in Scripture and the tradition of the church. "It is here that Christianity becomes a living tradition or lapses into forms of dead traditionalism" (Osmer 1990:186).

For reinterpretation critical education is necessary. Formative education, as demonstrated, focus on the formation of the learner through enculturation. Critical education, as said, is organised so as to maximise evaluative thinking. It "fosters individual insight whereby this 'cultural furniture' is taken apart and reassembled in new ways" (Astley 1994:79). Critical education is ordained towards the examination of educational premises. In this way the learner is engaged with the teacher in a systematic inquiry relating to the issue at hand.

Critical education, when again using Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive educational objectives, results in *analysis* and *synthesis* of what has been taught, and its *evaluation* using internal evidence (for example, consistency) and external criteria. "It appears that critical education primarily fosters in the learner certain intellectual abilities and skills of the cognitive domain ('thinking critically'). ... The focus here is on the learner rather than on the content learned (the tradition)" (Astley 1994:84,85).

Astley (1994:87), affirms the need of both formative and critical education. The problem is that formative education without any critical element whatsoever could be indoctrinatory. "The church as a whole, however, desperately needs more critical education. If Christianity is to survive and develop as a lifestyle and as a belief system into the twenty-first century it must undergo continual re-formation spurred on by continual critical evaluation from within the household of faith."

It is very important that this emerging innovative spirit must be encouraged among the laity today. "It is a travesty that parachurch organizations often do a far better job of tapping into the creativity and leadership of laity of mainline churches than those churches do themselves. ... (they also) seem to be far more creative in developing new forms of ministry than do the mainline churches" (Osmer 1990:186).

### **5.1.3 The interdependence of the formative processes**

The interdependence of these two formative processes is acknowledged by a wide range of Christian educators. In 1982 Jack L. Seymour<sup>48</sup> and Donald E Miller edited a book: *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education*, in which they sought to map the literature of the field of Christian education. This book was written by various Christian

---

<sup>48</sup> In 1993 Seymour was a professor of Christian Education at Garrett Evangelical Seminary, Evanston, Illinois.

educators and provided a set of organising principles<sup>49</sup>, a map, to reflect and clarify the state of the church's education. The sequel, *Theological approaches to Christian Education* (1993), offers new information and ideas regarding the major theological issues within Christian education. In this volume they brought together some of the world's leading Christian educators to reflect on such issues as tradition in the church, religious pluralism, human development, spirituality, feminism and liberation theology, practical theology and hermeneutics. Some of the contributors included Charles R. Foster<sup>50</sup>, Susanne Johnson<sup>51</sup>, Melanie A May<sup>52</sup>, David Merritt<sup>53</sup>, Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, and Richard R. Osmer.

This second book discusses some of the crucial theological issues, central to the educational task:

- 1) The content of the faith - the nature of the tradition;
- 2) the nature of the community of faith and how the church provides and transforms the activities of education;
- 3) the nature of human beings and the processes of personal transformation;
- 4) the mission of the church in the world and the relationship of education to social transformation; and
- 5) theological methods - the processes by which religious and theological meanings are made.

Some of these insights will be used in the middle part of this Chapter under the heading: five movements. But for now the main issues in the book are important. Seymour and Miller (1993: 22-24) see a strange shift in the definition of the church's teaching ministry since the Enlightenment. Church leaders often sought ways to give shape to the faith so that it could be taught (traditioning), and teaching were defined less as a way to translate

---

<sup>49</sup> In 1982 it appeared to them that the five primary metaphors being used in the field were: religious instruction, community of faith, development, liberation, and interpretation. Each put emphasis on contrasting 'strategies' for engaging in education (Seymour and Miller 1993:11).

<sup>50</sup> Foster is a professor of Christian Education at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>51</sup> Johnson is Associate Dean for community life at Perkins School of Theology, South Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

<sup>52</sup> May is chair of the Commission of Faith and Order for the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.

<sup>53</sup> Merritt is moderator of the Education Working Group of the World Council of Churches.

(reinterpreting) the dogmatic content of faith. "Christian education thus tends to become a ministry to support and build up the church, rather than a theological discipline that struggles to understand how the faith is to be communicated so that it can be lived."

The writers of *Theological approaches to Christian Education*, endorse the same point as Osmer when they say: "We hope to reclaim the dialectic between theology and teaching that has been reflected throughout the history of the church. We believe that a more fundamental understanding of education is needed - one that sees teaching as a theological activity - that is, empowering the people of God to be agents within the public world of God's presence. In fact ... teaching was a theological task of seeking to discern and understand God's revelatory activity in the lives of persons. In this view, education is changed from an activity of church maintenance to one process of the continual re-forming of the church - in other words of participating in the dynamic process of understanding, interpreting, and living in relationship to (God)" (Seymour and Miller 1993: 23).

In their conclusion the writers make the explicit point that Christian education is more than the initiation of persons into a faith that has been delivered in a relatively completed form. "Learning is more than remembering or re-creating; learning is also membering and creating. The process of learning the faith that was delivered to us is a process of interpreting during the act of receiving" (Seymour and Miller 1993: 239).

Seymour and Miller (1993: 239) use the words *education* (initiation of persons into a faith) and *theology* (reflection within the community), for what this study calls *traditioning* and *reinterpretation*. They call for an interdependence and partnership between these two: "We need a fundamental concept of education, wherein teaching is a theological activity, empowering the people of God to be agents of the new community within the public world of God's presence and power. Such education participates in the dynamic process of understanding, interpreting, and living in relationship to (God)...understanding arises from action, and action arises from understanding, so that education is an ongoing praxis."

Likewise they appeal for a concept of theology, wherein there is a constant process of interpretation and discovery in view of the actual experience of the people. "Theological understanding arises from the process of learning and is shaped by it, while theology gives significant guidance to learning, as it, itself, is being transformed" (Seymour and Miller 1993: 240).

This interdependence between *traditioning* and *reinterpretation* should be visible in the forms we use for faith formation. This can only happen if traditioning is a community enterprise of the whole people of God, not just of those who are professionally trained, and if reinterpretation is carried out in conversation between the scholars and the people,

as they address the injustices the people face<sup>54</sup>. Traditioning and reinterpretation is closely bound together in the people's search to discern the meaning of Scripture for themselves in the light of their own immediate experiences.

Richard Osmer (1993: 216-238), notes that any religious teacher is engaged in an exercise of practical theology, for such teachers seek to understand and shape a learning situation according to their understanding of God's will. It is not just traditioning, the application of established theological truths to a particular situation that takes place, but rather reinterpretation as a community of people living and studying together bring the combinations of their "pre-understanding" to bear upon a further understanding, to shape both the religious tradition and their contemporary situation.

Seymour and Miller (1993: 249), appeal for what they call a confessional dialogical approach. This is what happens when one "... comes with a precommitment from one's own tradition, but willing to reinterpret the tradition within the context of other Christian traditions, be in dialogue with the cultural disciplines, and engage the wider cultural issues". They think the most important task of educators, and the whole church during the twenty-first century, will be to find an understanding and praxis that will allow the gospel to be expressed in new ways which are faithful to God's purposes.

Osmer (1990:18) calls upon the teaching office of the church to "... embrace the tension between its transmissive-preservative and reinterpetive functions. Ultimately, the church's normative beliefs and practices at any given time are an outgrowth of the interplay of these two tasks. Frequently, certain offices or agencies focus more attention on one or the other. Theologians, for example, may engage in reinterpretations of faith that go far beyond what the ordinary believer is ready to accept. Representative bodies or denominational leaders ... on the other hand, may focus more energy on maintaining continuity with the past. Both are essential to the church's teaching ministry."

Christian education will have to find a way across this fundamental separation that has developed between theology and education. They will have to join hands to serve the church in a continual process of reinterpretation within the community of faith. The

---

<sup>54</sup> In the church in Latin America one finds a shift from a hierarchically structured, professionally dominated leadership to a leadership of the whole people. "The people of God search Scripture and tradition though the present action of God in their midst, which is then expressed as political activity. The goal of Christian education is to listen to the experience of the people, build community, clarify problems that impede justice, then act in behalf of justice. Education is not for the sake of indoctrination ..." (Seymour and Miller 1993: 248-9).

message is constantly being reinterpreted in a process that requires a partnership between traditioning and reinterpretation<sup>55</sup>. This interdependence is prevalent in all the different processes this study proposes for faith formation. This will not be discussed now, but rather as part of each of the five succeeding movements.

Astley (1994:78) argues the same point when he notes, "All critical education involves some formation in values; and most formative education in our culture goes along with at least some elements of critical education. Further, formative and critical education really occupy two points on the continuum along which actual education programs may be plotted." He goes on to show that the critical education/formative education distinctions have many forms in the educational and theological debate. There is for example, the distinction between '*kneeling theology*' and '*sitting theology*' (as Hans Urs von Balthasar calls it). Where the first type of theology characterises praying faith and positional identity (confessional, proclaiming and identifying), the second is systematic knowledge about faith and is characterized by critical dissociation (rational, reflective and open). He then argues that the two need to be combined as the learner both expects and needs the strengths of the two approaches: "... the openness and reflection of the self-critical type of theology and the living authenticity and positionality of the other type".

The balance between these two processes is very important. If too much one-sided emphasis is put on traditioning and formative education it leads to indoctrination. But purely reinterpretative-critical education is also unacceptable. Astley (1994:80-82) gives three reasons:

a) *Logical difficulty*: Much of our knowledge is inarticulate, acritical tacit knowing. "We cannot learn everything by the critical examination of explicit grounds, premises and first principles and the construction of a new edifice of knowledge for ourselves on the basis of such raw material; nor can we engage in this criticism at all where the grounds of our knowledge are hidden." A further argument for some sort of formative education is: "Critical thinkers need to be formed in critical thinking before they can exercise the skill" (Astley 1994:80,81).

b) *Psychological difficulty*: The second difficulty Astley (1994:81) names, is: "Without long-term and long-lasting processes of formation, a person's identity and belief system

---

<sup>55</sup> See also William Frankena's (in Astley 1994:70) argument: "Education involves initiating in traditions of thought and action while aiming at creating individuals who can and will make new advances within those traditions."



will not be established strongly enough for him to have sufficient confidence in himself to embark on critical education."

c) *Moral difficulty*: This difficulty is that any culture justifies the passing on of its own attitudes, values, beliefs and practices on moral grounds. Purely critical education is therefore rare in history, particularly in the field of religion.

It is thus clear that there is a need and proper place for critical education, but it can only function properly within the context of formative education. As the philosopher and humanist Ronald Hepburn (in Astley 1994:83) says, "Practical educational wisdom requires finding a mean, between on the one side such a relentless self-critical campaign, and on the other a complacent, or an over-anxious, refusal ever to reappraise."

The point here is that tradition comes in the written word, the sacraments and in ministry and that it is in a constant process of reinterpretation. Tradition is always being formed dynamically within a living relationship, a manifestation of God's grace. The interpretation and reinterpretation of tradition in worship and sacrament, in service and study of Scripture are essential for faith formation. There is a mutually interactive relationship between the processes that tradition and those that reinterpret the tradition. Both are important for the formation of faith. Harris (1989:116) writes, "Teaching is not only initiating into the church's life, and handing on the tradition; it is not only the application and explication of the Scriptures. Teaching is also the act of reinterpreting, questioning, analyzing, and even at times rejecting and resisting." We should shape learners in a tradition and at the same time make them rebel against it.

This combination of conserving, formative traditioning and critical, liberating, reforming reinterpretation is presented by Westerhoff. Astley (1994:92), regards this position as a recognition that "formative Christian religious education can pass on knowledge and understanding of the Christian story that itself sets up a chain reaction in learners that leads them to new, transforming and liberating insights. Hence the Christian learner may be formed by the church's tradition into someone who takes the Christian gospel very seriously, and that may involve the learner in a critical reassessment of that tradition - particularly on social issues - as well as of the world's practice."

## **5.2 Facilitating five processes for faith formation**

The hypothesis of this study is: Christian religious education will form people that are religious in a Christian way if it facilitates the following five processes:

- 1) From schooling to active remembrance of tradition,
- 2) from alienation to engagement,
- 3) from rugged individualism to formation in a relating community,

- 4) from ignorance to transformation for social reconstruction, and
- 5) from rational formality to mystery and art.

Each of these movements will be discussed under four headings:

- What is the educational approach we are moving away from?
- Towards which approach are we moving?
- Who are the proponents of such a shift?
- Which educational methods will facilitate such a move?

The first heading: *What is the educational approach we are moving away from?* will describe the educational approach we wish to avoid. It will illustrate how certain approaches hamper the formation of faith.

The second heading: *Towards which approach are we moving?* will be the constructive proposal. It will show how a specific approach builds on the epistemological and socialisation debate of Chapters 2 and 3 and how it can facilitate the formation of faith.

The third heading: *Who are the proponents of such a move?* will briefly review the current writers who support such a position.

The fourth heading: *Which educational methods will facilitate such a move?* will rethink educational methods from a faith formation perspective. This part will use insights from *Teaching from the heart*, by Mary Elizabeth Mullion Moore<sup>56</sup>. In her book she chose five educational methods because they are "... organic<sup>57</sup>, dealing significantly with relationships, and they represent a cross section of educational methods " (Moore, 1991:24). Our interest lies mainly in her description of the various methods.

### ***Hidden curriculum***

Chapter five discusses the five movements and corresponding methods but it is important to clarify something before this discussion. There is a broad consensus that method is not neutral. All methods used have a "build in" curriculum. In the past it was often naively thought that method is neutral in communication. Now we know that our method also communicates and must correspond with the movement we want to facilitate.

---

<sup>56</sup> She is professor in Theology and Christian Education at the School of Theology at Claremont, California.

<sup>57</sup> These methods practise the art of teaching in "... such an organic way that people are connected with themselves, with one another, with social systems, with the art, and with transcendent reality" (Moore, 1991:2). These methods keep theology and education, and theory and practice together.

It has been said that this study works with the assumption that considerations of method come before, during and after the identification of content. In fact, what subject matter we choose is actually shaped by our method and by our theory about method. Before we proceed a few observations about what Parker J. Palmer (1993:34-40) calls the "Hidden curriculum" should be reviewed. This discussion shows the importance of thinking about method.

Palmer says that in his educational experience, "too much of the lecturing was authoritarian, too much of the listening was unengaged, too much of the memorization was mechanical - and the ethos of too many classrooms was destructive of community." Irrespective of the words that are spoken, these methods form people mainly in four ways:

- In conventional classrooms reality is considered to be "out there". The reality in the classroom, for teacher and student, is regarded as irrelevant. This brings about a detachment between the knower and the known. We view the world from afar, and all compassion is "educated away".
- To obtain objectivity we handle the knower as if she is a "blank slate" that only receives the unadulterated imprint of "knowledge". "The aim of objectivism is to eliminate all elements of subjectivity, all biases and preconceptions, so that our knowledge can become purely empirical. ... To invite students into active participation in knowing would be to risk the distortion of the facts by those passions. By keeping students passive and feeding them a steady diet of facts, we try to kill off their passions" (Palmer 1993:35).
- Conventional classrooms also have the tendency to isolate the knowing self. There is a one-on-one encounter with the known. To guard against subjectivism, teaching is set against community, students are compelled to compete with one another.
- Through conventional education we become manipulators of each other and the world rather than mutually responsible participants and co-creators. The distance, the unexamined inner self, and the lack of community, place us in an endless competition for supremacy over each other.

Let us now look at the five processes.

### **5.2.1 From *schooling* to active *remembrance* of tradition**

The first important challenge is to move away from schooling and to move towards an active remembrance of being. The latter means, a theoretical process that is reflected by contemplative activities, by critical reasoning and by a narrative activity that make accessible the tradition of God's revelation to this community over time. It is in the process of continual reinterpretation of the "Christian Story".

The epistemological debate have shown why this is an important process to emphasise in faith formation. Chapter 2 emphasised that reliable knowledge also has a logical, rational side. To arrive at truth we need reason. Although there was an overreaction in the quest for rational certainty in the past, the importance of rationality cannot be ignored.

Plato keeps reminding us that there is a reliable source of truth beyond us, that is not of our construction alone. We, as Christians can claim no less. He also points out that 'knowing', clear thinking and right ideas should shape 'being' and draw us forward by desire.

Augustine (a "confessed" Neoplatonist), tries to weave revelation and reason together to promote wisdom in Christian faith. He followed Plato in asserting that the mind is the only source of what qualifies as "knowledge." Although he worked with a hierarchical dualism between mind and body, he worked with a unity of reason, memory and will. He emphasises the importance of reason, which is the mind turned upwards to God.

Despite Descartes' many liabilities, he has enormous influence on Western thought: his rationalism shifts knowing to the individual subject as the agent and source of knowledge. Furthermore he initiates the practice of critical reasoning in the process of knowing.

Kant unites and affirms the basic truth of both empiricists and rationalists, finally erasing Plato's line of demarcation. He emphasises the active role that the learner plays in the process of learning.

As indicated in Chapter 2, this rationalist line was picked up in the educational debate by the "discipline of knowledge" movement of Augustus Hermann Francke (1663-1727), and Johann Herbart (1776-1841). This was developed further by religious education theorists who placed primary emphasis on teaching the content of the Biblical message and the Christian tradition. H. Shelton Smith and James D. Smart have represented this emphasis in the Protestant traditions. They keep reminding us that faith formation should fully impart and teach the message of Christianity.

Chapter 2 discussed the importance of active *remembrance* of tradition in faith formation. What then do we mean by this process?

#### ***5.2.1.1 Moving from schooling (banking)***

It is important to appreciate that all functions of ministry educate people in faith and that one should "... abandon the typical mind-set that education is synonymous with schooling and the school is a place where children go to receive information" (Groome 1991:296). It is important to emphasise that traditioning does not mean *schooling*, banking or blind

indoctrination (see Freire). Though "Sunday school" is the most obvious expression of the church's educational ministry, it also has a whole world of education surrounding it.

Schooling is false in the first place, because it separates "knowing" from "being". As indicated, the intended outcome of faith formation is to inform people's beliefs and convictions, form their values, identity, and ethics and empower them as transformers of themselves and their world, towards God's reign. One readily recognises that "the church's whole way of 'being' in the world has faith education consequences" (Groome 1991:296), or as Maria Harris (1989:47) states, "the church does not *have* an educational program; it *is* an educational program".

Schooling is false because it is a violent process. Henri Nouwen, in his book, *Creative Ministry* (1971:6-10), shows that schooling is violent in three ways:

### **1) It promotes competition and rivalry**

In a schooling system that encourages ongoing competition, knowledge is no longer a gift that should be shared, but a property that should be defended. Fear makes many students oversensitive to the reaction of their friends and teachers. It makes them extremely self-conscious and highly defensive. This becomes preventive in the faith formation of a student.

### **2) Schooling is a unilateral process**

Underneath schooling methods of teaching there is still the prevailing supposition that someone is competent and that someone else is not, and that the whole game is to try to make the one just as or nearly as competent as the other. Even the many discussion methods may quite often be unmasked as simply more acceptable ways to transmit a definite message.

"In this context the teacher is strong: He knows and should know. The student is weak: He does not know and should want to know. The whole movement, therefore, is from the teacher to the student, from the strong to the weak, from one who knows to one who does not yet know. It is basically a unilateral process" (Nouwen 1971:8).

There is a deep authoritarianism in the schooling paradigm. "When the 'what' of Christianity is thought of as timeless and unchanging, the 'who' determining this 'what' almost invariably is granted more power and authority than any individual or institutional office warrants. ... The willingness of persons to identify their own position unequivocally with the will of God results in a readiness to see others as deviant or even evil when they do not think or act in accord with supposedly biblical norms" (Osmer 1990:44).

### **3) Schooling alienates students from themselves.**

School is mostly a preparation for later life, for 'real' life, for the future where the real things are supposed to happen. Schooling is just indoor training, a quasi life. It is not surprising that many students are bored in class.

Schooling is alienating because neither students nor teachers are able to express their own individuality and have regular relationships as a primary source of learning. They are pulled away from their own experience.

Schooling is false because it often denies the many ways that the "timeless truths from an inerrant Bible" are historically conditioned and mediated. What is bracketed out are the ways that beliefs, in every age, are limited by the particularities of historically conditioned languages and worldviews.

When conservative Protestantism uses schooling it is deeply influenced by the modern world it is attempting to "counter". Extreme emphasis is placed on enhanced subjectivity. "Being 'born again' is frequently presented as guaranteeing one personal happiness, inner peace, and, in its more perverse forms, worldly success" (Nouwen 1971:9). Certain dimensions of those which are opposed, are inevitably presupposed. The teaching that is offered is not timeless, nor derived directly from Scripture. It is always the product of a finite interpretation process.

#### ***5.2.1.2 Moving to active remembrance of tradition***

It has been stressed that this movement should not be understood as merely traditioning and transmission. It is true that community is shaped from the tradition, but community also carries the tradition. "The tradition becomes a living reality in a community where there is openness toward one another and toward all whom Christ loved. For such a community the scriptural traditions become a vibrant reality. The traditions are carried by a living community and become an essential part of the community, forming a reality which nourishes the community. ... The process of interpretation and reinterpretation is thereby taken into the heart of the meaning or a living tradition" (Seymour and Miller 1993: 241-2).

Osmer makes two suggestions on how to broaden congregations' active remembrance beyond the church school:

- a) Centre on transitional moments of personal and corporate status in the lives of church members.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> He gives a list of these "teachable moments": Baptism, catechetical instruction, marriage, death of a spouse, election to a church office, leaving home, and divorce.

- b) Create opportunities to go deeper into the subject matter.

Another way to have a remembrance of tradition is through rites, myths and symbols. Our Story is disclosed in what is wonderfully familiar: bread, wine, fire, ash, earth, water, oil, tears, seed, songs, feastings and fastings, pains and joys, bodies and thoughts, regressions and transformations. These things happen in what Nelson (1986:7) calls "the poetic church".

Christian educators have always valued and utilised the fact that "The Bible is God's story" (Larsen 1995:15). But there is a rediscovery of the story. The words *active remembrance of tradition* is an attempt at greater utilisation of the narrative as counteracting to our present tendency to over-intellectualise Christianity. Not that all remembrance is story-telling. There are storyless places in the tradition. As opposed to those who belittle rational truth, Larsen (1995:26) sees the reduction of theology to recital as an undermining of the theological task - namely, to reflect on and clarify the tradition. But the point remains, there is a remarkable Renaissance of the narrative in the church.

Remembrance of tradition is based on history and action. It enables us to avoid thinking of Christianity in terms of universal abstractions, and instead roots it in the story of Jesus of Nazareth. His story gives shape and specification to our lives and to Christian communities. "Scripture, then, provides a narrative of a real historical existence, affirmed to be of foundational significance to the community of faith, incarnating both values and ideas" (McGrath 1996:109).

It is important to ensure that remembrance of tradition will keep the two interrelated processes of traditioning and reinterpretation together. Astley (1994:93) stresses the point that the communication of the tradition "... *itself* can also function as a sort of theological/ethical critical education, by forming people in a particular position (with a particular set of attitudes, beliefs and valuations) which is the base for their critical thinking not only about other cultures, but also about the received Christian tradition and their own Christian position. It is this that gives support to the claim that enculturation can be radical, transformative and liberating. This sounds paradoxical partly because we tend to speak of a tradition as a single entity, forgetting that every tradition is always really a complex of traditions, i.e. of different, though interrelated, elements in a culture that are being passed on." Astley (1994:93) thus claims that faith formation is "creative (re-creative), reconstructive and self-transforming. ...The true message of the gospel, passed on with the rest of the Christian tradition, thus provokes and catalyzes our critical reformation of the tradition."

### 5.2.1.3 Proponents of this move

Something that was taken as a precondition for faith formation, was the importance of a rational understanding of the Scriptures. This, however is not so obvious any more. As people are living less and less in a world where knowledge of the Biblical content can be assumed, more people involved with faith formation are focusing on the importance of teaching the tradition. It is not only Reformed theologians like R.R. Osmer (*Teaching for faith*: 1992) who are pleading this, but also Roman Catholics like Thomas Groome (*Sharing Faith*: 1991).

In recent years there have been an awakening to the narrative in the church. The rediscovery of story has stirred considerable interest in storytelling, story sermons and narrative theology. When one focuses on the narrative in the church as a method to reflect on and clarify the tradition, one can look at Don Browning's (1991) emphasis on the narrative structure of faith, Markquart (1985) stress that the preacher should be storyteller, Brueggemann's (1988) approach in using the biblical narrative, Hopewell's ideas in *Congregation: Stories and Structures* (1987), Foster's *Educating Congregations* (1994: 29) and many more.

Moore (1991:178) identifies six persistent themes that appear in the broad literature concerning the narrative.

- Imagination is being revalued as an important ingredient in education. This is the theme of Maria Harris, who sees imagination at the heart of religious education.
- The narrative is an important source of imagination. Here educators<sup>59</sup> emphasise the healing power of fantasies and fairy tales. Perhaps religious educators have been more attentive to this method, because of the fact that religious traditions are carried largely by story.
- The narrative is a source of human consciousness and social critique. Maxine Green (in Moore 1991:140), finds a relationship between the dawn of consciousness and social critique. "In the process of arousing consciousness and stirring imagination, narratives raised people's awareness of the social situation and of new social possibilities."

---

<sup>59</sup> William Bausch is one of the many religious educators who specifically identifies the role of story in linking theology and imagination. See *Storytelling: Imagination and faith* and *Telling stories compelling - 35 stories of people of grace*.



- Stories are forms of indirect communication that convey truths that cannot be communicated directly. Here Moore cites the work of Kierkegaard, Fred Craddock and C.S. Song.
- Stories have the power to form and transform the world.

#### *5.2.1.4 Narrative method*

"Teachers who use a narrative method are people who hear stories, gather stories, and tell stories. They are alert to what is happening around them; they see and hear and give birth to stories. They bear the heritage of generations and appreciate the stories forming in their midst" (Moore 1991:178). It is people who help others to move towards an active remembrance of tradition. How then can the narrative method contribute to this movement?

Teaching narratively calls forth images of storytelling, simulation-gaming, dramatisation and ritual reenactments. Narrative is a significant mode of human communication. Although scarce in contemporary educational reflections, the picture of narrative method in religious and moral education is somewhat different. As Moore (1991:136-7) notes: "In recent years an awakening to the power and multivalence of story has stirred considerable interest in storytelling, story sermons, narrative theology, and the literary approach to ethics and values."

McGrath (1996:105), using the insights of Hans Frei, indicates how the rise of rationalism led to the gradual rejection of the narrative character of Scripture. "For precritical writers, the interpretation of Scripture concerned an interpretation of stories and their meanings by weaving them together into a common narrative referring to a single history and its patterns of meaning. The Enlightenment, however, adopted a network of approaches to biblical interpretation which reflect the rationalism and anti-supernaturalism of the movement."

A narrative is an imaginative, "... organic description of the world, and storytelling helps to relate persons to the story that is told. As a nonlinear, indirect form of communication, narrative has power to form and transform its listeners" (Moore: 1991:25). This relational teaching has the power to communicate the organic relationships in reality.

There is some implicit and explicit assumptions underlining the narrative method (Moore 1991:143-4).

- There is the assumption that human beings are imaginative creatures that are capable of imagination and in need of it. It is the assumption that imagination is important to mental health, human growth, cross-cultural understanding, and social critique.

- The second assumption is that people learn through stories.
- The third assumption is that social learning takes place through stories.

### *Strengths of the Narrative method*

The narrative method has one clear advantage for faith formation: It has the potential to connect people and events across time, to root them deeply in the cultural and religious stories of their own people, and to cross boundaries into the stories of other people and the earth (Moore 1991:149-157). A theory of faith formation that use the narrative method take into account that:

- 1) Stories contribute much to our meaning-making. It takes into account that the Gospel is such an overarching narrative.
- 2) Narratives can raise our consciousness of how societies are ordered. Furthermore, they can stir our imagination with regard to how societies *could* be ordered.
- 3) Narratives function as symbols through which people experience feelings, ideas, and recollections, gaining access to meaning not easily elicited otherwise, such as religious emotions.
- 4) "Stories can embrace considerable complexity and weave characters and events together in a way that communicates relationships more fully than most categorical and conceptual language can do."
- 5) Narratives have the potential to represent the processive flow of reality.
- 6) By stirring the imagination this method reminds of that which is beyond. It points to a new vision and the unknown.
- 7) Narrative education includes a historical consciousness. ... It reminds us that we are part of a larger community.

### *Disadvantages of the Narrative method*

One of the problems is, that the range of stories we use, are not broad enough. Moore (1991:157) says: "If story functions as a symbol reflecting the interrelated world and fostering our relationship with the world, then we need select stories that reflect many dimensions of the world. We need stories of animals, plants, fantasies, humans, historical and contemporary cultures, and divinity. We need a wealth of stories, and many different kinds to reflect the fullness of reality. ... We also need stories that reflect different perspectives, different forms of consciousness. ... We need stories from ..., woman's perspective, South African perspective, and Wall Street perspective."

To summarise, the first important challenge is to move away from schooling and to move towards an active remembrance of being, that includes contemplative activities, critical reasoning and a narrative activity. This happens in the process of continual reinterpretation of the "Christian Story". The narrative method has the advantage to connect people and events across time, to root them deeply in the Christian Story. Martin Luther is an excellent example of someone who understood this. "He neither regarded narrative as something to be eliminated, in order to get the "points" it was making; nor did he regard 'story' as the unique vehicle of truth" (McGrath 1996:106).

### **5.2.2 From alienation to engagement**

The second movement to facilitate the formation of faith flows from an educational approach that alienates people from themselves as agent-subjects-in-relationship to an approach that engages people's practical-political dimensions. It is an approach that intends to shape people's 'being' in time and place. It is a perspective that keeps in mind that "to be a person is to have a story" (William Bausch 1984:171).

The epistemological debate showed us the importance of this emphasis. It was indicated that the second source for "knowledge" is sensory experience. For the empiricists, thought begins with experience - nothing is ever in the mind that has not been in the senses first. For Aristotle, knowledge comes through the senses and experience, and begins with the study of nature and real things and everyday life. For him it is important to engage praxis for people to live good and virtuous lives. Experience provides reliable practical political knowledge for productive activities and for living ethically in society. His notion is that praxis includes all reflective activities which engage the whole person.

Like Augustine, Aquinas is convinced that faith should seek understanding, that reason can confirm and complement the truths of revelation. But in epistemology their paths split. He insists on the unity of soul/mind and body as constitutive of the person. Therefore the body is always an active participant in knowing and sensual experience. He teaches us an epistemology that recognises a theological method of reflection on life experience in the light of Scripture and tradition.

John Locke rejects Descartes's rationalism and proposes an epistemology that is convinced that reality is not something upon which we impose our innate ideas. The data of experience is rather the primary and efficient source of reliable knowledge. This insight of Empiricism, that personal sense experience is constitutive of human knowledge and knowing and shapes our ontic selves, are taken seriously in this second movement. It affirms that the incarnation is the core and claim of Christian faith.

Throughout the history of education this concern for the present experience of the students has been constantly present. Comenius (1592-1670) argued, as far back as the seventeenth century, that teaching should begin with the native abilities and experience of students. Likewise Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and Froebel (1782-1852), argued for a pupil-centred, experiential approach. John Dewey (1859-1952) argued for a synthesis between the disciplines of knowledge and present experiential learning. For him education began with a grounding in present experiential activity. But he did not limit education to the "present experience".

This emphasis on an experiential way of knowing for religious education is also advocated by many leading Protestant theorists. For Sherrill, Cully, Miller, and Wyckoff amongst other, religious education and formation arise from the lived experience and interaction of people in communities of Christian faith. This group of people insists that an active/reflective and relational/experiential way of "knowing God" is consistent with a biblical understanding of how we come to know God.

How, then, does educators move from an educational approach which alienate people to an approach that engages people's practical-political dimensions?

#### ***5.2.2.1 Moving from alienation (ignoring people's stories)***

This dimension tries to prevent people being viewed in an ahistorical way in education. It asks of Christian religious educators the conviction that they are teaching "people," educating their very 'being'. From this we are to create events that are 'humanising' for people, that teach them that they are constantly challenged to become agent-subjects who grow in God's likeness. This requires an environment, process, and content that are free of manipulation, domination, and indoctrination, which do not treat people as dependent-objects-in-isolation, and which do not ignore their stories.

Our faith formation approach should actively engage people's whole 'being' in place and time - their physical, mental, and volitional capacities, their head, heart, and actions, their intellect, desire, and will, their reason, memory, and imagination, and enable them to reclaim their past, embrace their present, and take responsibility for their own and others' future.

#### ***5.2.2.2 Moving to engagement (agent-subjects-in-relationship)***

This movement works with self-identity; the sense we have of being 'selves' with continuity over time. To do this, Groome (1991: 86-95) chose a phenomenological, rather than a metaphysical approach. He attends to the aspects about ourselves that appear in our consciousness: bodily, mental, and vocational capacities. He then combines this corporeal,

mental and volitional capacities with the recognition that self-identity entails our sense of past, present, and future. This suggests a schema of human wisdom for 'being' and the activities to be engaged and brought to consciousness to engage people as agent-subjects in relationship.

Schema of personal wisdom as 'agent-subjects-in-relationship'

CORPOREAL	MENTAL	VOLITIONAL	
Maintaining	Remembering	Inheriting	of the past
Engaging	Reasoning	Relating	in the present
Regenerating	Imagining	Committing	towards the future

All of these themes and activities should be engaged in over time, and educators can neglect none of these consistently if they intend to facilitate the formation of faith. They will help people to become what they are: free and responsible historical agents of their own, becoming alive to the glory of God. Becoming fully alive "agent-subjects" (originating and historically responsible persons with intrinsic value as persons qua persons and not objects (avoiding objectivism)) and "in relationship" (that is to say, avoiding subjectivism), does not come to us as a 'nurture' already complete, but presents us with the historical task of engaging as agents through the Holy Spirit in our own becoming.

Osmer (1992:110), states that it is "probably not adequate to think of commitment primarily as a matter of human will". For him it is not the students' willpower that will make them more dedicated in their relationship to God. "This is because the human will is grounded in something deeper: the underlying story by which humans make sense of their lives." It is this story (what he calls personal identity narrative NWS) that influences the various decisions and choices people make.

Osmer (1992:111,113), points out the importance of reinterpreting life stories when teaching for commitment. He emphasises that students' wills are "strongly influenced by the underlying narrative they use to understand themselves". The point he is making (in line with many recent scholars) is that narratives are the shape of *personal identity*, namely those qualities of a person that persist through time, providing continuity at each stage of life. "In short, our self-understanding naturally takes a narrative form."

Osmer (1990:126-148), proposes a process with five aspects to help students reinterpret a particular area of their life stories in the light of their encounter with the Christian story:

*Remembering* (bringing the past into the presence of God)

*Reflecting* (becoming aware of the interpretive keys of their personal narrative)

*Encountering* (facilitating a genuine dialogue between the student and the voice of tradition)

*Sharing* (developing mutuality among students)

*Deciding* (discerning the changes that should take place)

### 5.2.2.3 Proponents of this movement

There are many approaches that, more than in the past, focus anthropologically on the faith development and growth of people<sup>60</sup> and try to influence it. The Christian educators of the twentieth century have sought especially to incorporate the understandings of Jung, Erikson, Piaget and Kohlberg in their approaches. The most well known is perhaps James Fowler's *Stages of Faith*, (1981).

It is difficult to explain the question how commitment and conversion function within this developmental and growth process. Osmer's "teaching for commitment" in *Teaching for Faith* (1992), is a Reformed attempt to see commitment as part of faith formation. It is he in particular who emphasises the role of the narrative in the formation process. When people retell their own stories and reinterpret them in the light of The Story, then the person can decide to begin rewriting her or his own story.

Donald Capps (1990: 10), shows in *Reframing - A new method in pastoral care*, that the meaning events have for us "... depends upon the frame in which we perceive it. When we change the frame, we change the meaning. Every person has such frames or interpretation keys (Osmer) with which they get meaning out of their story."

When faith formation engages people's stories and involve them as Agent-subjects-in-relationship, it leads to *second-order change*. *First-order change* is change that occurs within a given system without changing the system. *Second-order change* alters the whole system, rewrites the person's whole story. It "... lifts the situation out of the paradox-engendering trap created by circularity of the attempted solution and places it in a different frame. The key to this shift from unwanted first-order change to the desired second-order change is the reframing of the situation" (Capps 1990: 12,18).

Reframing means to change the frame in which a person perceives events and when the frame changes, the meaning changes. When "the meaning changes the person's responses and behaviors also change" (Capps 1990:10). Reframing thus means "to change the conceptual and/or emotional setting". A person's whole "being" is engaged and she is invited to adapt the Christ Story as a more apt key to interpret her life.

Stories play an important role in people's self-interpretation of their lives. Change happens when important events and characters are knit into a different plot. Commitment is to reinterpret a certain part of one's life story in the light of the Christ Story (See also Fowler 1987: 45).

---

<sup>60</sup> For a discussion on the implications of human development for Christian education from an African perspective, see Megill (1976:15-33).

One of the effects of the media civilisation on human behaviour involves imagination, images and feelings. Babin (1991: 45) talks of the "emerging affectivity". Through feelings your whole body is "grabbed". Internalisation is a further effect of the media civilisation. The society alienates us by making us conform to the society. "We live 'outside' ourselves. Being 'in' has replaced 'being'."

Babin (1991: 45) concludes: "What do young people today need most? They need to be alone in the fields to think, to be called on to listen to the depths of their being, to feel their passions and the spirit of revolt rise up inside them, and, on their way, to hear more than the sound of transistors and to see more than the advertisements - to encounter a person whose foundation is in herself and who is living because she is and not because of her clothes."

What should happen, is that we should awaken people to certain aspects that are dormant in them. "In moral training, we have to move from an education by label - the law, principles, habits, and so on - to an inner education of taste" (Babin 1991: 47). We learn this through masters and value groups, by living and by doing, not through the intellect alone. Education is then based on experience and atmosphere. "Freedom is likewise learned in contact with a liberated person." Babin (1991: 49) calls this process the awakening of interiority.

#### ***5.2.2.4 Phenomenological method***

Phenomenological educational methods help people to reach into themselves and others and draw forth meaning. This is a form of teaching that expects God's revelation in the world. "The most relevant assumption ... is that God is incarnate in the world, incarnate in everything that is" (Moore 1991:92-3). It is therefore a method that can help engaging people in faith formation.

This approach was first developed by Edmund Husserl in the nineteenth century. It was introduced to the religious community by Anton Boisen, the founder of clinical pastoral education. He worked in the context of early-twentieth-century United States, where theological reflection was usually limited to the study of written texts. He began an in-depth study on the lives of people.

The kinship of Carl Rogers, the chief architect of humanistic psychology, with this method lies in his attempt to organise education in relationship to particular students and situations, and to nurture the inner resources and goals of the student. Under the influence of Rogers, Ross and Martha Snyder have done much to introduce phenomenology to religious education.



Phenomenology deals with what appears<sup>61</sup> or what is accessible through perception and with the inner experience of the perceiving subject. The starting point is the "facticity" of existence. This is in opposition to Descartes who focuses on the *cogito* at the expense of the world.

Moore (1991:97) remarks that this method is important in education because "... it involves listening to the voice of the people and of God at work in the midst of people. Just as Jews and Christians seek meaning in the biblical witness by reading biblical texts to discover God's revelation, teachers and learners can also seek meaning by reading human lives to discover God's revelation through those texts."

Phenomenology means reaching into ourselves and others to draw the meaning from within. This is a mode of incarnational teaching and have two elements - observing/listening and dialogue. "The heart of the method is to observe and listen to oneself and others and to share with one another. This is the method of intersubjectivity, or seeking meaning in human life. It is important from an organic perspective, ... meaning that God and the world are incarnate in everything and everyone." (Moore: 1991:19,25)

This method asks for openness. Learning can be expected in the teacher-student relationship, in the other person, in the marginalised, in joys and tragedies, in acts of compassion and acts of anger towards injustice.

This method deals with two assumptions: "One is that reality reveals God: ... everything is holy and can reveal meaning. ... The other is that everything is interconnected in a web of meaning" (Moore 1991:93). This is done in two dimensions:

- a) The first is to reach into oneself and others to observe life experience. Teachers and students listen to people's stories and observe their actions. This is a *descriptive* dimension.
- b) The second is an *interpretive* dimension. Here meaning is drawn from people's stories and actions.

This method implies an honest listening to students; the teacher is not so much involved in controlling or directing the students as in joining them as a colleague in search of meaning. In this sense, this method is closely akin to a case study in which the teacher also functions as a midwife.

---

<sup>61</sup> The word is derived from the Greek word *phainomenon* which means "to come to light" or "to appear".

Ross and Martha Snyder outlined a series of steps<sup>62</sup> in their methods of studying human behaviour:

*Observing* - Allowing people or situations to speak for themselves. The learners perceives what is happening without analysing their own prejudgments (bracketing).

*Describing* - Giving specific details about what the subjects said and did.

*Looking for patterns* - Searching for relationships among the details observed.

*Theorising* - Postulating what these patterns mean. This is a move toward abstraction.

*Practising or testing* - This is to make decisions in the light of the theory and acting differently. On the other hand, it is the repetition of the whole process in different situations and comparing the new theories which emerge.

### Strengths of the Phenomenological method

This method has the following strengths and can assist people in engaging in the process of faith formation:

- 1) It uses intersubjectivity (an engagement of persons with one another, with the earth, and with themselves). This takes openness, genuine interaction and interchange seriously. One of the problems, however, is that intersubjectivity is impaired when curriculum "materials present stories and pictures of only one ethnic group, or ... tradition" (Moore 1991:92).
- 2) People respond to one another in the hope of bringing wholeness, justice and freedom to each other. "Caring for others is part of teaching" (Moore 1991:92).
- 3) Teaching is not recitation by rote.
- 4) It can be valuable for one faith community to visit another faith community and try to understand its story. It is valuable when one is seeking to encounter another person's life story.
- 5) The teacher enters the world of the learner and interacts with the subject. This offers an opportunity for direct observation in a natural setting.
- 6) It allows the living text (the situation and the people) to speak for itself. It takes experience seriously.

---

<sup>62</sup> See Osmer (1992) in *Teaching for Faith*. He uses a similar method to "teach for commitment". See also John and Adrienne Carr's methods in *Pilgrimage Project*.

### Disadvantages of the Phenomenological method

A faith formation approach would regard the Bible and historical tradition as sources of knowledge. Teaching these sources is a means of grace, alongside with preaching the Word and celebrating the sacraments. Faith formation will have to provide more opportunities for learners to meet traditional sources of authority subject to subject. "Through the intersubjective experience of the historical traditions, the range of experience consciously available to persons is expanded. ... (They) are subjects to be experienced, subjects that mediate God and the world to us" (Moore 1991:115).

Faith formation does not focus on the present only, but also on the past and future possibilities existing in emerging occasions. "The past is received, and the person decides in each moment how to respond - to repeat the past, ignore it, or transform it" (Moore 1991:116).

What about experiences that we usually ignore? For faith formation we need to give special attention to listening to and watching out for God in people whom we usually ignore - the poor and marginalised. Not only should our experiences be broader, we should also pay more attention to reflect on the experiences we have had with the marginalised.

Faith formation encourages engagement with an enlarged circle of experience, therefore it should include "... prayer and meditation to allow mysteries incarnate in the world to touch the learner and to encourage a sense of mystery they will never be able to touch" (Moore 1991:117).

Learners and teachers should be more aware of the social web in which their study of experience is caught. Human subjectivity is not passive. How, for example, do people's life goals and fears and hurts affect their view of the world and their decisions for action?

Despite these reservations, phenomenology is one educational method that enables one to move from an educational approach that alienates people to an approach that engages people's practical-political dimension.

#### 5.2.3 From rugged individualism to formation

The third movement that is important, besides a move to *traditioning* and *engagement*, is a move away from *rugged individualism* to *formation* in a faith community. In many churches, it is not unusual to be taught that religion is what a person does with his or her *solitariness*. "... At the extreme, this ideal of the mature person often became someone capable not only of individualism but of "rugged" individualism; someone able to make decisions and judgments autonomously, alone; someone who could always be totally

rational in all situations, even if being rational was inappropriate. ...The loner as hero becomes the epitome of human success ... "(Harris 1989:28). In faith formation this is not the case.

Only when we move away from rugged individualism, will the community of faith really form faith. "Yet, contemporary expressions of voluntarism undermine the church in two ways. Individuals come to the church simply in order to have their individual needs met, rather than in a self-giving relationship to the larger community of faith. Further, individuals now have the option not only to choose different expressions of community, but to decide whether any community at all is necessary. The latter choice violates the distinctive character of the Christian life" (Seymour and Miller 1993: 243).

#### ***5.2.3.1 Moving from rugged individualism***

In *Sharing the Journey* (1994:35), Robert Wuthnow reminds us that individualism once meant "being responsible for ourselves and our neighbors". But there are now a full-scale retreat from public life. "...we have replaced this traditional concept with a more radical individualism that looks out for number one at the expense of everyone else." He (Wuthnow 1994: ix) describes the destructive addictions of a society "composed of individualists". He looks at the small-group movement in the American society and calls it a "quiet revolution" (1994:2). He argues that the support-group movement is altering American society, both by changing their understanding of community and by redefining spirituality.

He shows the difficulty small-groups have in moving people from rugged individualism to community. "Community is what people say they are seeking when they join small groups. Yet the kind of community they create is quite different from the communities in which people have lived in the past. These communities are more fluid and more concerned with the emotional states of the individual. ... It reflects and extends the most fundamental dilemmas of our society" (Wuthnow 1994:3,4).

The small-group movement, standing in the tradition of voluntary association, provides people with a strong sense of community. It is a reaction against the breakdown of traditional support structures. Although it does a better job than most critics would like, Wuthnow (1994:6) shows that these groups of like minded individuals does not easily escape the pull of individualism. In a certain sense these groups are not fostering community. "Some small groups merely provide occasions for individuals to focus on themselves in the presence of others. The social contract binding members together asserts only the weakest obligations. Come if you have time. Talk if you feel like it. Respect everyone's opinion. Never criticize. Leave quietly if you become dissatisfied.

Families would never survive by following these operating norms. Close-knit communities in the past did not, either. But small groups, as we know them, are a phenomenon of the late twentieth century. There are good reasons for the way they are structured. They reflect the fluidity of our lives by allowing us to bond easily but to break our attachment with equivalent ease. If we fail to understand these reasons, we can easily view small groups as something other than what they are. We can imagine that they really substitute for families, neighborhoods, and broader community attachments that may demand lifelong commitments, when, in fact, they do not." The point Wuthnow is making is that the small-group movement in many cases plays a major role in adapting religion to the main individualistic currents of secular culture.

Wuthnow suggests a few factors in the current small-group movement that keeps it from challenging rugged individualism: a) members are seldom related biologically to each other as in a family; b) they have a great deal of control over their sense of community; c) dependence means emotional care rather than physical or economic support; d) emotional support is defined to mean encouragement rather than criticism or guidance; f) people recognise that they can move from one group to another.

The importance of this move away from individualism is, as indicated, stressed by Hoge, Johnson and Luidens's research on the continuing decline and marginalisation of mainline Protestantism in America, *Vanishing Boundaries* (1994:204,205). They emphasise the importance of personal support through authentic human relationships when people feel insecure, uncertain or isolated. Furthermore, they talk about the need for "... social contacts and a sense of community. This need seems strongest in urban settings where family and friendship ties are weak, at least for the newcomers in town."

#### ***5.2.3.2 Moving to formation in a relating community***

"Christianity embodies a distinctive call to community" (Seymour and Miller 1993: 243). Faith formation occurs when Christians are joined together in a relating community, the Body of Christ. Personalism is again discovering "that to be a person means to be with" (Harris 1989: 29).

The socialisation theorists of religious education have convinced us of the formative influence of the ecclesial environment on people's faith identity. This movement means that we do not only live in the social and cultural world, we also interact with it. Formation indicates that who we are, what we do, and who we become are greatly shaped by where and among whom we have been socialised.

In her chapter with the title: "*Church: A People with an Educational Vocation*", Harris (1989:47) reminds us that "... the church does not *have* an educational program; it *is* an

educational program." For her community and communions are the initial educational ministry. Harris (1989:77) writes: "[Community] moves us towards the healing of division, towards overcoming brokenness, and ultimately towards achieving wholeness. One Christian is no Christian; we go to God together or we do not go at all."

Don Browning (1991:51), reaffirms that we need the interpretive skills of entire communities to gain relative reliable knowledge.

A word of caution about the socialisation approach comes from Osmer (1990:188-9). It was justified that the Sunday school pattern of education was called into serious question during the past two decades by advocates of the religious socialisation approach to Christian education, but, "... an unfortunate by-product of [this approach] ... has been a diminishing emphasis on teaching in formal contexts in the church. Teaching does not take place solely in formal contexts, to be sure, but unless it takes place in such contexts it is highly unlikely that teaching will take place in informal contexts or, if it does, that it will be of a high quality." Maybe it is time to say out loud: The teaching of the youth remains the single largest focus of teaching in most congregations, and nothing should be done to undercut this important agency of congregational education.

#### ***5.2.3.3 Proponents of this movement***

Christian Education by the broader faith community or whole congregation

The socialisation approach to Christian formation is certainly not new in the church, it started with a socialisation approach to early catechumenate. We have already seen Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) as the grandfather of the modern theorists of socialisation, especially through his book, *Christian Nurture*. Among the leading socialisation theorists since then have been George Albert Coe (*A Social Theory of Religious Education*), Harrison Elliot (*Can Religious Education be Christian?*), C. Ellis Nelson (*Where faith begins*), John Westerhoff III (*Will our Children have faith?*), Randolph Crump Miller, Donald E. Miller, and more recently Charles Foster.

This approach works with the assumption that for the process of faith formation the general quality of the Christian life of the faith community must be improved. This is also true of the smaller circle in which people live: the family, friends, peer group, small group, and others.

This is the point that Dingemans (1986: 13), makes when he says that faith is not facts to be communicated. One cannot own God. One can only wait in the circle of the faith community for God to show Himself. In the faith community faith formation is not authoritarian, but "reciprocal." It is clear that he wants to say that we should begin by

being learners before God, together. Our first interest is not the question: How does faith transmission occur? But: How does faith formation happen in a community?

It is the writer's contention that this approach has a strong Biblical foundation and has been neglected for too long. The material of John and Adrienne Carr (*Experiment in Practical Christianity*: 1985), is an example of what this approach could be in an actual teaching/learning situation.

### The importance of relationships and modelling

The second accent in this approach works with the assumption that faith transmission happens through the "person" as medium. Burger<sup>63</sup> distinguishes between two lines of thought in this category:

#### 1) Modelling

The first line of thought believes that lifestyle, worldview, and belief systems are largely taught through modelling. It is therefore important that the "teacher" must be someone whom people look up to and respect. It is important that participants could identify with such a person and follow his or her example. This group is clearly represented by Larry Richards (*A Theology of personal ministry*: 1981), and many interdenominational youth movements<sup>64</sup>.

Maria Harris (*Fashion me a people*: 1989), is also one of the people who stresses the importance of the context of education. For her the church is a people with an educational vocation. The whole congregation educates. Children observe and are being "educated" all the time.

#### 2) Relationships

The second group emphasises the importance of relationships. Only after true relationships have been established can faith formation really take place. Our relationship with God is interdependent on our relationships with each other. Richard R. Osmer's contention that we must teach "for relationship" would resort under this category (please see *Teaching for faith*: 1992).

This second approach have been taken further by Parker Palmer (*To know as we are known*: 1993), among others, with his focus on love as the primary context and precondition for faith formation. Elizabeth Moore (*Teaching from the heart*: 1989), also

---

<sup>63</sup> Unpublished notes, 1996: University of Stellenbosch.

<sup>64</sup> See also Dawn (1995:116-120).

expands this approach with her emphasis on *respect* in teaching. Nobody says it better than Nouwen (1971:12) when he says: "Perhaps no teacher can be a true teacher unless he is also to a certain degree a friend."

### **3) Intergenerational Religious education**

A third group of voices under this heading are people who plead for interage learning in the faith community. They emphasise that "... faith communities are uniquely positioned to take steps to draw people together across the generations for the well-being of individuals, families, and larger society" (White 1988:1). White (1988:11) declares that our housing, employment, schools, government, social clubs, athletics, communication, entertainment, and social activities do not foster generational connectiveness. The faith community is the only institution which will promote a lifestyle of human connectedness and cross-generational life and learning.

White (1988:18) says *intergenerational religious education* is "... two or more different age groups of people in religious community together learning/growing/living in faith through in-common-experiences<sup>65</sup>, parallel-learning<sup>66</sup>, contributive-occasions<sup>67</sup>, and interactive-sharing<sup>68</sup>."

#### **5.2.3.4 Creating community**

A relating community does not just happen. It requires the commitment of the leaders and members to decide that its future should be maintained and renewed through subsequent generations. We cannot assume that a single method will create community. Charles Foster (1994:68-79), reminds us of at least four tasks pertinent to building a relating community in a pluralistic world. These four will be discussed in short:

---

<sup>65</sup> When people of different age groups share an identical moment or event, such as watching a film or reciting a common litany.

<sup>66</sup> When generations are separated in order to work on the same topic or project but in different ways, befitting development, interest, or skills.

<sup>67</sup> The coming together of different age groups or classes for purposes of sharing what has been learnt or created previously. Here separate pieces of the whole are added together for everyone's benefit.

<sup>68</sup> This is a facilitation of a "cross-over" between people of various ages to get the other age-group's perspective. It is saying, like the Rogerian counsellor: "What I hear you say, is ..."



### 1) Transmitting the vocabulary of Christian community.

Foster (1994:69), shows that no community can survive if its members do not have a common vocabulary to communicate its deepest commitments and meanings. "Christian communities have rich and complex vocabularies. They consist of words, signs, images, symbols, and rhythms. These building blocks to communication are clustered into spoken, sung, and enacted messages. The vocabularies of Christian communities originated in the interaction of God and people at specific times and places. Through the centuries, the stories, poems, songs, and dances evoking these events have received overlays of meanings nuanced by subsequent experiences of people whose lives have been shaped by them." These vocabularies shape our perceptions and inform our sense of who we are.

Teaching people these vocabularies is essential for shaping a relating community. If we do not know the words of the general Christian church traditions, we cannot live on the promises of the Christian story.

### 2) Sharing the stories of faith

The Christian story is an integral part of the church's vocabularies. How does it build a relating community? This study has already made the point, as does Walter Brueggemann, that *story* is the primal mode of education in the church. When we move away from *story*, trouble surfaces. Foster (1994:71), says that if we shift our primary attention away from story we "... find ourselves preoccupied with questions that distract us from the primary task of church education, namely: to build communities of faith capable of nurturing our identification with God's transformational missions."

### 3) Nurturing interdependent relationships

Foster (1994:73) is sadly correct with his observation, "Too few congregations provide qualitative relationships embodying the power and possibilities of good news for children, youth or seeking adults. ...The lack of significant adult relationships limits the power of the stories of the church well enough to discern the contemporary possibilities in those stories." This is as true for youth as for adults.

### 4) Practising the life-style of Christian community.

"The repetition of an action until its accomplishment achieves a high standard of performance and is a critical component of learning" (Foster 1994:75). Practice in habits, attitudes, sensibilities, critical thinking and worship should consume a significant amount of educational attention of congregations.

#### **5.2.4 From ignorance to transformation**

An adequate practice of social *transformation* and reconstruction is important for faith formation. The church must be engaged continually in dialogue with the critical issues of the contemporary world. People must be freed from an *ignorant* privatised faith and called to address the full range and breadth and depth of human experience. If religion is defined too narrowly, it severely limits and distorts the formation of faith. "The church is chosen, called, and sent to live in the world as the Body of Christ, the sign and witness of the coming of God's reign of justice and peace, the presence of God in all places and for all peoples" (Seymour and Miller 1993: 247).

##### **5.2.4.1 Moving from ignorance (*privatised faith*)**

Hanson (1987:470) points out that the people of Israel inferred qualities from the example of Yahweh to form their identity. Israel's understanding of God as the Deliverer God established an ethical responsibility for the community. "As Yahweh was a righteous God acting to establish and preserve the rights of every individual, however lowly and oppressed, Israel in order to be true to its own birthright, was to be a righteous people ..." and "... as God has acted to deliver precisely those who had been excluded from the privileges of the Egyptian social system, so too Israel was to act on behalf of the vulnerable and dispossessed around it, giving rise to the quality of compassion as another cardinal characteristic of her notion of community" (Hanson 1987:470).

At this point Carstens (1995:59) has a few valid points of criticism against Groome. Carstens is an example of someone who tries to move people to a higher level of critical consciousness. But a raised consciousness is not enough. Carstens challenges Groome on the following aspects:

- 1) Groome's dynamics of experience are devalued against reflection and conceptualisation.
- 2) Groome focuses on conceptualisation and makes the classic mistake to think that new convictions lead to new praxis.
- 3) Groome's process should be called "shared reflection" rather than "shared praxis".
- 4) Groome presents very little creativity and variation in "the environment of shared praxis" (Groome 1980:227).

The socialisation debate have given us different answers to the question of what social context is needed for faith formation. But it is evident that it cannot be a private reflection on Scripture. Faith formation implies learning from other traditions and settings. It means testing our *understanding* of the Christian Story by measuring other's experiences and understandings.

Roozen and others (1996:2-5), launched a five year project for the globalisation of Theological Education in twelve schools because "much of North American theological education is inimical to the Gospel". This project is an example of education striving to form faith through engagement with 'others' through immersion in their life world.

#### ***5.2.4.2 Moving to transformation for social reconstruction***

There is a growing awareness in South African churches that they are to live a "public" faith. A faith that is socially and politically responsible rather than focused on private sacral matters. Faith formation will have to "flow over" in public discourse and political struggle to bring about a better world. Until now this aspect was mainly identified with liberation communities.

This movement refuses what Groome (1991:150) calls "the continual domestication of the churches' education" and moves beyond ecclesial nurture.

This movement to social reconstruction raises questions about the sense in which Christ's call is inclusive or exclusive. "The mission of the church is to ensure that all humanity might be touched by Christ, while those who are called and sent continually reinterpret their calling in the view of the range of human experience. ... Such a view puts a priority upon education as a primary instrument of dialogue. In this view, education is at the heart of the mission of the church. At the same time, education is stretched beyond the narrow transmitting of the tradition. Education must itself become concerned about the range of human experience. It must become involved in the debate about the cultural issues of the time" (Seymour and Miller 1993: 248).

South Africa's problems are of such a nature that it requires structural, political and economic change. The problem, according to Boshoff (1995:8,16-17), is that the economy has largely lost its ability to establish economical growth and job creation. He notes the following implications for the church:

- The church cannot dissociate itself from the RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) because social development is a function of the Church.
- The church should clearer about Biblical ideas on social justice and development.
- The church will have to focus more on members' participation in forums, rather than only in church commissions.
- The church should become involved at grassroots level with community projects.

#### ***5.2.4.3 Proponents of this movement***

In recent years many books were published that stress the importance of social reconstruction in the church and its relationship to faith formation: Seymour, O'Gorman,

and Foster, *The Church in the Education of the Public*; Boys, (ed.), *Education for Citizenship and Discipleship*; Moran, *No Ladder to the Sky: Education and Morality*; Maureen O'Brien, *Religious Education and the Public*; Toton, *The Public and Political Responsibility of Christian Education*"; Schmidt, *"Toward a Strategy for Public Christian Education and the work of James Fowler, Weaving the new creation.*

"Shifting to a teaching ecclesiology and adopting the stance of a cognitive minority need not lead mainline churches to a defensive withdrawal from cultural engagement. It could create the conditions by which social criticism and long-term commitment to social change are sustained" (Osmer 1993:135).

#### Faith formation as a political activity

That faith formation is also a political activity is obviously not a new idea. But one would be able to make a case that Calvinism with its strong emphasis on faith as vocation is one of the strongest proponents of this line of thought. This type of education has been brought to our attention during the last few decades through the way that the church has learnt from the work of the South American, Paulo Freire. In the USA it was Thomas Groome who developed this approach further.

This also places an important emphasis on the whole debate of the "Public Church's" role in the modern democratic state. The work of Don Browning (*A Fundamental Practical Theology*: 1991), is also important in this context. He has been pleading his whole life for a closer relationship between ethics and Practical Theology.

#### 5.2.4.4 Conscientisation method

One of the most important developments in educational methodology in this century is the method described by Paulo Freire as *Conscientization*. Because this method helps people to name oppressions and re-form social reality. This method helps people to reach into the social structure and leads them out to reform.

Conscientisation names and reforms the social reality, particularly oppressive social structures. It relates to the basic process that comprise ideas of freedom and change. The method tries to move education beyond individualism and simply strive to conserve the status quo to help society become something new. As stated in Chapter 1, freedom is essential to faith formation, as it frees people and societies so that they can live more fully.

The writer wants to stress a certain point before he begins with the description of this method. It is annoying to see how easily the Dutch Reformed Church - as white, middle-class, mainly educated people - turns a blind eye to the struggles of persons whose race, class, or educational journeys are "different" than theirs. This method is important to open

our eyes to those realities in South Africa that we have denied, as it will open our ears and hearts to enter into partnership with others in their struggle for liberation.

Freire was an educator in his native country, Brazil, and in Guinea-Bissau in Africa, where he worked primarily in literacy education. In both countries he dealt with the effects of colonialism and movements towards the liberation of oppressed classes. "He simply argues that when a person sees one oppression, that person may be increasingly open to seeing other forms of oppression as well" (Moore 1991:169). Conscientisation makes the following assumptions regarding a worldview and social structures:

- 1) Education either perpetuates the present social system or brings about transformation.
- 2) Humanisation is a human vocation, but dehumanisation is a real option.
- 3) Oppressors are not capable of liberating the oppressed; the task of the oppressed is to liberate both themselves and their oppressors.
- 4) Education needs a pedagogy of the oppressed or reflective participation by the oppressed.
- 5) A pedagogy of the oppressed leads to action.
- 6) This action itself is subject to continuing re-examination and revision.

Moore (1991:171) identifies two basic stages of pedagogy in this method:

- a) Consciousness-raising (unveiling the world of oppression) and
- b) Work for transformation (transforming the world of oppression).

This is a process of cooperative problem posing, identifying the problems in their social context and then seeking liberating social action. "The central educational act is action-reflection, and this is done by the teacher and learner together" (Moore 1991:171).

Three religious educators who have taken the work of Paulo Freire very seriously are Thomas Groome, Maria Harris and Daniel Schipani. For Groome, education is a process of reflection on shared practice, which leads back into reformed practice. The five movements of Groome's method were discussed in Chapter 4. Maria Harris draws significantly from feminist theory in her approach to liberating education. She gives much attention to the aesthetic dimensions of teaching. All these educators seek a liberating approach to education. All are concerned "with the person of the teacher and the qualitative relationship between teacher and learner" (Moore 1991:174).

#### Strengths of the Conscientisation method

This method helps learners not only to name the world as they experience it but "also to hear how others experience and name it". They need to name not only the aspects of a situation that are obvious to them, but also the aspects that might be invisible.

Furthermore, learners are guided to discern the meanings in the many different perspectives and to discern what each perspective reveals about vast social structures.

It also aids the definition of the problems in a way that is sufficiently complex to take account of the many interrelated aspects of a situation and the ever-changing nature of the social structures.

This method formulates strategies for action. It proves the need to include social analysis in all theological analyses.

#### **5.2.4.5 Case study method**

A second method that can move people to transformation is the method of using case studies. This method attempts to learn from a particular, concrete slice of reality through the description of a particular situation. Students are asked to reflect on the situation presented, to interpret, and to come to some judgment or decision regarding action. It means to reach into a particular case and draw out a cluster of truths. It involves "seeking truths in particular cases". The case study approach has been widely used in Medical Studies, Psychiatry, Law (1871) and Business Administration (1908). This method were not introduced formally into theological education until the 1960s<sup>69</sup>. It works with the idea that "every empirical actuality is valuable, that each one is related to all others, and that each has something to teach about the world" (Moore: 1991:19,24).

Cases are usually open-ended and students are asked questions like: "What would you do? What do you think is going on here? What should the persons have done?"

"The purpose is to learn to see more in the particular - to draw out multiple insights from a particular case viewed from several perspectives." A case is thus "a focused segment of actual human experience that does not have a predetermined conclusion or 'solution' " (Moore: 1991:31).

**Data gathering:** "The most common sources of data gathering are in-depth interviews, literary documents (such as letters, formal agreements, census reports), and oral and printed records of chronological sequence of events" (Moore: 1991:37). This data gathering is approached with a principle of selectivity in mind.

**Data analysis:** Three types of questions are helpful when analysing cases:

**Action Questions:** What should this character do/ have done?

---

<sup>69</sup>In 1967 this approach was introduced by Robert Evans and Thomas Parker for studying the classical disciplines of Bible, church history and theology (Moore 1991:31).

**Theory Questions:** A reflection on the case in the light of a particular theoretical framework/ point of view or theology.

**Description questions:** Draws descriptive data from a case that teaches about a particular principle.

Wilson and others (1996: 5) says: "The most effective case discussions are those in which participants can share honestly, ask real questions, and listen carefully to the insights of others. A good case facilitator is a good moderator, and guide who studies the terrain, points the way, insures a safe travel environment, and then joins the participants on the journey."

Now is the time to reflect on the strengths of the case study method from the point of view of faith formation (Moore 1991:32-36). A method of faith formation that takes the case study method into consideration will achieve the following:

- 1) Take the learner and his or her environment seriously because the case study method investigates and teaches about human physiology or behaviour.
- 2) Apply theological principles to particular areas of learners' lives. It will show how principles are applied in a particular field of study.
- 3) Reflect on actions in the light of theology. It will evaluate the life and actions of a particular person or groups.
- 4) Give students the opportunity to practice decision making and develop skills of discernment. They will reflect together on hypothetical moral dilemmas and become more experienced in making decisions in ambiguous situations.
- 5) Engage the learner to facilitate insight. It will help students to gain insight into a life situation if they can identify with a person or persons in the case.
- 6) Keep theory and practice together, and make it clear that theory is already inherent in practice.
- 7) Introduce "real life" into academic settings by presenting real situations that defy oversimplification or overgeneralisation. Students will be reminded that learning is not only an "academic" debate.
- 8) Help the learner to relate theories back to the complexities of life, and to see a large, complex picture, without artificially extracting particular elements.
- 9) Take growth seriously. It may be used to study the dynamics of change and process.
- 10) Help people to live faithfully in a rapidly changing world by making projections of the future. It can "predict" how a person or community may act in the future.
- 11) Discern the movements of God. The situation includes influences from God, from human and nonhuman reality, and from the living and nonliving world.

The case study method has certain disadvantages that could hamper the formation of faith:

- 1) The possibility of distortions in the case material.
- 2) The assumption that truth lies within the case and not just in the ideas and experiences that we bring to it.
- 3) Only the experiences of which we are conscious of, are accessible in a case.
- 4) Assumptions or pre-formed ideas that are brought to the case should be thoroughly reflected on.
- 5) Does the case describe more than human experience? The case must also describe social patterns in the community, economic patterns, historical events, environmental contexts, and shifts in the natural environment.
- 6) What expressed and unexpressed hopes, long-range plans, and demographic data on trends has the case builder built into the case?
- 7) How are God and the world revealed through the case?
- 8) Can the examples of the characters in the case guide our future? Are we open for new and different solutions?
- 9) People do not always respond to a case.

### **5.2.5 From rational *formality* to *mystery***

This fifth and last movement in the process towards the formation of faith is a movement that enlivens people's imagination and empower their will to be co-creators of the Vision of God's reign, now. Here we move away from rational formality towards the creative and imaginative (*poiesis*) dimension of faith formation. Attention is given to people's visions and to the mystery of God.

In this movement the writer draws on the insights of Pierre Babin in his book, *The New Era in Religious Communication* (1991). In the 1960s Babin discovered what he calls "the audiovisual language". He states that it is not just ideas, philosophies and religions that change the world, but that technological innovations of the era are crucial factors in changing culture<sup>70</sup>. He discovered that a new all-encompassing language of communication has developed, because of a radical change in culture today.

#### **5.2.5.1 Moving from rational formality**

Babin developed a new concept of communication. For him faith was formed by the medium's effect on a person, not only by the formal rational message. Babin (1991: 12),

---

<sup>70</sup> There are many books that describe the same trends in the American context, for example: Anker (ed.): *Dancing in the dark*, Ritchie: *Marketing to generation X*, Bellah: *Habits of the heart*.



calls the audiovisual media *information*. It is not only a new language, but also a new global culture. He defines it as follows: "The age of information is not essentially a matter of creating individual pieces of information or communicating information, in the sense of transmitting from sender to receiver. It is, above all, a matter of giving the existing information a new form: that is, putting this information into a new framework, which both reorganizes the internal relations of data and transforms their external display." Data is instantaneously presented, easy to use, harmoniously arranged and pleasant to look at. The information society is a society in which "... giving a new form is more important than producing material goods or even data." The whole society is busy with data processing.

Babin (1991:13,14) describes the influence of the evolution of the information society on faith formation. It is strongly influenced by both the affective, the imaginative and audiovisual images. "We can no longer speak of the efficaciousness of liturgy, but rather we must speak of its beauty." We live in a world where we must help people to "dream". We must help people to see the world in a "pleasing light." "It is not those who reason, but those who *tempt* who will succeed now. The society of communication will be the society of *longing*. Therefore we should insist that the religious educator makes the message beautiful, attractive, and tempting."

For rational formality the dominant language is words, which lead to oral or written discourse. This discourse, which is determined by the Phoenician alphabetical code, imposes on communication a certain strictness, reason, abstractness, and choice of special points of view. Communication must consist of clear ideas and arguments. "Because of alphabetic communication, the church gradually and unwittingly came to undervalue the original forms of communication and to give priority to the catechism to communicate faith" (Babin 1991:86). In this environment we shared "ideals, aims in life, doctrines and aspects of knowledge, rules and methods, and struggles and conflicts. Administration ... is our substitute for parenthood and friendship."

"It is above all systematized ideas and doctrines, laws, formulas, codes, and emblems that are communicated. The separate and abstract nature of the Phoenician alphabet makes ideologies flourish - ideologies with clearly differentiated territories, definitions of aims, and interest groups. ... Feedback is expressed above all by an exchange of words and ideas about precise points. The need to react and to establish distinctions takes precedence over the need to achieve unity. The key words that characterize the feedback .. are defense, combativity, speech-making, and competitiveness."

Formal rationality may be described with reference to Babin's *Alphabetic Church*. This specific type of church is understanding and responding. He describes it with the following

words: "Public hall, bare altar, desks and microphones, good visibility, pews in ordered rows, white lights, no resonance, everything in the dominant key, pastor is in the center, sermon is essential, lengthy and explanatory, affective, democratic addresses want to convince and mobilize people, the choir leader uses generous conducting movements, modern hymns with complex rhythms, a church of explanation and teaching, verbal responses and acts of belonging, and participation.

#### **5.2.5.2 *Moving to mystery and art***

Westerhoff (1994: 21), reminds us that mystery "... is not something about which we can know nothing but that about which we cannot know everything. ... For too long we have been living in the prosaic world of surface reality. We need to shift our attention from theological reflection to spirituality, from instruction to formation, from the sciences to the arts." This move could also be called a move to imagination (Westerhoff 1994:21, Babin 1991, Harris 1989), or a move to art (Westerhoff 1994: 23).

Harris (1989:171) remarks: "If we would plan curriculum, then, in ways that are true to these principles, we need to think of ourselves primarily as artists and only secondarily, if at all, as technicians and programmers. ... if our vocation is the fashioning of a people ... we need to work as poets and sculptors and creative artists, colleagues of the brooding, hovering, indwelling Spirit. We need to take our cues from the working of imagination."

Babin (1991: 55) tries to move education towards mystery because it "is not *what* we understand, but how we understand" that has changed. Our understanding, under the influence of the audiovisual language, is more and more symbolic, emotional, intuitive, global artistic and creative, and less, logical, conceptual, analytical, sequential, temporal, active and dominant, as when it was under the influence of books. The whole world is coming under the influence of electronic forces which overdeveloped our senses. The medium puts a "frame" around the content of faith. Babin describes three "frames" (Babin 1991: 58-69).

*Faith framed by the aural sense:* In an oral culture people must be shaken by information, they are not interested in knowing alone. "Young people are affected by vibration alone." These people want to "feel an environment". They want "presence" not action and they are "... particularly sensitive to inner voices - those that rise up from their own bodies or from their souls." The auditory way is thus one of liturgical development rather than intellectual teaching. This kind of faith is developed easier in the atmosphere of the retreat house than through a well prepared sermon.

*Faith framed by imagination and the affective:* Audiovisual language over modulates the nervous system. This bombardment by images, stories, violent events, highly coloured personalities and dramatised emotional situations soaks our faith in the "archaic forms and impulses of primitive religion" (Groome 1989: 63, see also Westerhoff 1994: 21). There is a resurgence of religious feelings, dreams and spectacles. This points to a future "... more mystical than dogmatic, more generous than realistic, and more concerned with the quality of life and with health than with intellectual justification."

*Faith framed by the "ground":* The ground is that which frames and contextualises the explicit figures. It is the deeper tones of feeling and background behind the content. It includes the organisation of lines and masses, light, framing, colour, texture and even the spatial and temporal environment.

This move to mystery may be described with Babin's Modulation Church. For this type of church he uses words like: Darkness, reduced visibility, shades, warm lights (orange and red), stained-glass windows, rich low notes and harmonics, deep resonance - giving a vibrant foundation to the silence, Christ is in the centre, a mysterious presence, short and sober sermons, silence is essential, worship is marked by sacred attitudes and slow hieratic gestures, repetitious music, organ not dominant, an atmosphere of contemplation and meditation, and participation is taking part in the vibration.

Henry H. Mitchell is someone who writes out of the African American tradition. In his book, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (1990), he also calls for this move to a more liturgical way of preaching and teaching. He gives two reasons for this:

"One is the reality that primary concern is given to cogency; typical sermon outlines are devised on the basis of largely logical and cognitive criteria. The other fact is that the very creeds traditionally included in Christian liturgy were similarly designed; their original goal is to answer abstract theological questions in a manner that appealed to reason, and provided a basis for unity in empires and ecclesiastical bodies (Mitchell 1990: 17-18). For this purpose Mitchell proposes an "experiential encounter." He says: "The intuitive impact of experiential encounter is a very important part of the resources by which God moves to create the miracle of faith."

### ***5.2.5.3 Proponents of this movement***

#### **Role of the affective/intuition in faith formation**

This approach links, among other things, with the new emphasis placed on right brain functions. The followers of this approach stress different types of non-verbal

communication. Babin (discussed below) is probably the best articulated of the representatives of this approach, although others also represent a wide range of accents.

In the evangelical (and mostly charismatic) circles we get a "fragrant" usage of emotions in the teaching process. On the other hand, many groups have a quieter, inward bent learning process, which stresses the intuitive as medium for deeper knowledge of life. Here things like statues, rituals and symbols are important. Traditionally this could be found in the Anglican liturgical approach.

An important further development of this line of thought is articulated by Maria Harris (*Fashion me a people*: 1989), with her focus on imagination in the teaching/learning process. She proposes the use of art and the aesthetic in religious education.

One could also look at Sarah Little's emphasis on teaching as art. In Osmer's "teaching for mystery" (*Teaching for faith*: 1992), he articulates this aspect of the Reformed teaching/learning process.

### Pierre Babin

Babin proposes two processes of faith formation: The way of Beauty and the Symbolic way. Both of these processes move from formal rationality to mystery.

#### *The Way of Beauty*

Babin (1991 :110,112), explains that for this process communicators must learn to "develop religious sensitivity to beauty". "Triggering divine illumination by means of photos and paintings, music and song, liturgical actions, and audiovisual devices can lead to rediscovery of the great tradition continued in Eastern Orthodox religious education." The Third World people teach us that beauty is "radically human and social". Beauty refers to someone's inner being, to harmony and balance, to "a whole orientation that is in contact with the absolute". Thus beauty is "not aestheticism but a kind of human fullness".

The educator cannot simply be a teacher, he or she must be an "awakener" of beauty (Babin 1991:114). Faith formation begins with the stimulation of an awareness of religious dimension and this takes many forms: an awareness of a mystery (Rembrandt's paintings), an intuition of a source inherent in the whole of life, a feeling of a supernatural power of healing<sup>71</sup> (African music and some vibrant colors), an intuition of a perfect, stable and

---

<sup>71</sup> A feeling of salvation, forgiveness and being put back on course (Babin 1991: 117).

absolute order, and the awareness of a moral necessity<sup>72</sup>. What then are the qualities in an image that produces an awareness of the transcendental and mystery?

*Transparence*: This means "... the ability of a body to let the reality that is behind it appear clearly and intensely" (Babin 1991:121). This body can be simple transparent people, musical instruments like the organ that reverberates<sup>73</sup>, or stained-glass windows demonstrating translucency<sup>74</sup>.

*Being Eternal*: The "imprint of eternity" or "ageless quality" of a sacred image may be expressed in three ways: hieraticism; a perfect harmony of forms; and a motionlessness of characteristics and gestures. Gregorian chants are, for example, open to the effect of eternity. "Its seriousness, its flowing rhythm, its rounded phrases, its held notes, and its gentle pauses all help to evoke the eternal and give the impression of the sacred. Like Babin (1991:128), congregation can confirm: young people naturally prefer singing what is familiar to them, but they also clearly like to join in the monastic offices." For example, the songs sung at Taizé lead to silence and the peace of God.

*Being Out-of-Reach*: "God is presented as being elsewhere, infinitely distant" (Babin 1991:129). Silence and age says the same thing: "You cannot see. You cannot hold this. You cannot keep it. You cannot possess God. You can only adore God." "...young people have been returning to dark places of prayer, warm lights and flickering candles, stalls and hangings."

*Order and beauty*: From time to time we must "... tremble in the presence of the inexpressible beauty of the planets or the astonishing organization of microorganisms...; or we may stand in simple admiration before a flower or a shell with its delicate lines. At such times, we have a sense of the sacred." This experience of the sacred is also conveyed through a sense of order and stability which gives rise to a 'feeling of security' (Babin 1991:130).

*Breaking-our effect*: Because God is beyond everything, God's impression can also "... be found in negation, the state of trance, the boundlessness of the Dionysiac or voodoo cults,

---

<sup>72</sup> This necessity is linked to human dignity and expressed in concepts such as uprightness, faithfulness to oneself, justice, peace, and self-sacrificing love (Babin 1991: 117).

<sup>73</sup> By reverberation Babin (1991:124), means "a prolonging of the sound, created through reflection or repercussion". Almost a kind of echo.

<sup>74</sup> See also Nelson's (1986: 25) comments that rituals help us to "form the formless".

and the ecstatic dancing of certain African religions." "God lies beyond the limits of our human bodies and reason and transcends the forms and rhythms of our earth. God is not simply the perfect one but also outside our perfection" (Babin 1991: 131).

How does one express the "Christian dimension" of religious education? The communication of Christian faith is more than simply religious. It goes beyond religion and sometimes challenges it. The Christian document calls us to conversion, self-surrender and commitment<sup>75</sup>. The historical event of Jesus Christ is the first factor that distinguishes the Christian from the sacred. This historical fact has an "unpredictable, unusual and nonconformist aspect" (Babin 1991: 133). The second fact is that the Christian document functions inside a Christian community. Such documents must be "based on the faith and generosity of Christian groups"<sup>76</sup>.

### *The Symbolic Way*

In the second place we must use symbolic language to express the gospel today. Why symbols? Humanity is created in the image and likeness of God affirming the existence of an imprint in our "soul"<sup>77</sup>. When this is stimulated by the media it awakens religious feelings and a certain openness to religion (Babin 1991: 147). "Many people reject faith today because they find no connection between the present generation's great aspirations to justice, brotherhood, and the absolute, and the practice of the churches. How sad it is when one is conscious of a soul and there is no longer any God" (Babin 1991: 148)!

For faith formation the religious educator must, through fantasy, poetry, parables, dreams, miracles, prophetic signs and speaking in tongues, make people aware of the connection between archetypes and dogmas<sup>78</sup>. A symbol is something familiar in daily life, yet it implies something vague, unknown, or hidden for us. A symbol "makes us think". "If you

---

<sup>75</sup> See also the five additional features Babin (135-145) identifies as specifically Christian: The power of appeal; The sign of love; Interiority; Unity of opposites; and Scandal.

<sup>76</sup> Compare H.A. Snyder, *Liberating the church*. Not only documents but also theology must be born out of a Christian community.

<sup>77</sup> Carl Gustav Jung calls this "archetypes". The problem with Jung is that he affirms the existence of an imprint, but "not that of a being who makes the imprint" (Babin 1991: 147).

<sup>78</sup> "It is not a question of proving the existence of light ... It is valueless to preach light when no one can see it ... It is more necessary to teach man the art of seeing ... I insist that the main task of all education is to enable the archetype of the divine image - or its emanations and effects - to enter man's consciousness" (Jung in Babin 1991: 148).

see smoke, you will know there is fire. Smoke is the symbol of fire; it makes you think of fire" (Babin 1991: 149).

"Symbolic language ... is a language of temptation before it is a language of explanation. It leads not only the spirit, but also the heart; it moves the body. It is a language full of resonances and rhythms, stories and images, and suggestions and connections, which introduces us to a different kind of mental and emotional behavior."

"There have been narrow definitions of the symbol, but the symbolic way is fundamentally a complex and ambiguous whole of sounds, images, words and gestures, relationships, rhythms, scents, and many other factors that bring about a physical conditioning and physis emotion, both of which help the deepest demand made by the person and his or her religious archetypes to be awakened" (Babin 1991: 155). The symbolic way has both an individual (it confronts the person with himself) and a social (it builds up a community) effect. It is an activity and an experience<sup>79</sup> with the aim of illumination of revelation "at a higher level than simply intelligence" (Babin 1991: 155).

Babin (1991:161-163) names seven experiences that arouse a sense of God and can lead us to faith found in the Bible:(1) the experience of nature; (2) the desert experience (solitude); (3) serving the "poor";(4) the shared life in camps and other communities; (5) experience of creation and responsibility; (6) love; and (7) the universe of sound (music and singing).

More symbolic education would have a powerful impact on our Christian education. In the traditional catechise, we are confronted with the message in dogmatic truths and theological pronouncements. In mystery and art, we are confronted with the message in the dominant form of stories, key sayings, and modulation. Mystery as a method is full of images and stories that have an emotional impact on the heart. "It relies not on explanation, but on the communication of an experience" (Babin 1991: 165).

#### **5.2.5.4 Gestalt method**

The Gestalt method that reaches out to many different facts and ideas and draws out their unity, is ideally suited to promote mystery. This method developed from the work of Max Wertheimer (1912) and was expanded by Kurt Koffka (1924) and Kurt Lewin in relationship to learning. It has two basic educational elements - experiencing *many parts* of knowledge (the teacher offers some variety of materials, facts, and ideas) and *seeking*

---

<sup>79</sup> This could be meditation, fasting, solitude or going on pilgrimages.

*unity* (the teacher leads students towards unifying or harmonising the many diverse elements). Moore (1991:24) called this a mode of integrative teaching.

The gestalt approach represents many ideas in proximity to one another so that learners can put the ideas together in some sort of unity. There is, however, no linear pattern in the presentation. It is an organic method in which a variety of images and concepts are set forth for the learner. The word gestalt comes from the German word, meaning "shape" or "form". Gestalt is the pattern that forms unity from the parts. In the gestalt method of education, the teacher involves students in many experiences and ideas, and encourages them to bring these together into a whole.

Moore (1991:62), reminds us that "... Gestalt communication should seem quite natural to Jews and Christians whose Scripture are often woven together in this organic way. The faith communities who shape the scriptural texts often arranged stories and sayings in such a way as to communicate a dramatic whole." The gestalt method is also common in modern electronic communication where "a collage of pictures and ideas is presented" in the hope that the viewer will bring the ideas together into some kind of unified understanding.

Gestalt methods are also found in churches that are self-conscious about their architecture, art and music. "Spending time in a cathedral can be an experience of many different art forms - architecture, painting, sculpture, mosaic, tapestry, spoken word, and music. These fit together into a unity, but the unity will not be the same for every person" (Moore 1991:64).

Gestalt as method links with what Babin (1991: 112) calls "beauty". He tells how young people taught him that "beauty was music rather than image". He defines it as that which "accords with the human being's deepest aspirations. ... Beauty is an emergence from chaos and an orientation towards a summit. Becoming aware of beauty is accepting that which is orientated towards fullness."

### Basic concepts

People learn through **central, cognitive processes**. Learners acquire cognitive structures over time, rather than simply by association of stimuli and responses.

People learn through **problem solving**. Learning takes place as people interact with empirically perceived realities, not only abstract principles or formulas. It is through the solving of problems that people learn, not through the application of universal principles.

Learning involves the **whole person** - cognitive, affective, mental and physical.



**Law of Pragnanz:** People organise their perceptions in the direction of a good gestalt or form. People tend to organise in the direction of regularity, simplicity and stability.

**Law of Similarity:** People organise perceptions into categories of similar items or movements.

**Law of Proximity:** People organise perceptions according to the nearness of parts. Events that take place in the same time period or same part of the world are organised together.

**Law of Closure:** People complete incomplete figures, ideas, or series of events. "This implies that open-ended questions, conflict situations, and pending decisions can create motivation for closure and can thereby contribute to learning"(Moore 1991:69).

**Law of Good Continuation:** People organise perceptions so that the perceptual forms are continued in the same mode.

Implications of these "laws" in the process of faith formation through mystery and art are far reaching. A method of faith formation that understands gestalt will result in the following:

- 1) React against rote memorisation and drill and know that these are rated out of proportion to other forms of learning.
- 2) Take into account the patterns in human perceptions brought about by modern communication as Marshall McLuhan asserted. It will move away from lineal connections to configurations,
- 3) Promote lateral thinking (Edward deBono) in generating new ideas and approaches,
- 4) When a person or community enters a new "creative crossing" in life, new and past experiences come together in each moment<sup>80</sup>. It rejects the dichotomy between past and present and says that the past lives in the present, and also that the past continues to have influence on us.
- 5) Remember that God may dramatically reorganise our communities and create something new. New forms will continue to appear, always influenced heavily by the past, but also subject to the influence of novelty entering in the world anew.
- 6) Give students opportunities to experience *the many*. Faith formation will use the environment for teaching. Help students to explore the environment through many senses.

---

<sup>80</sup> This is called "Concrescence" by process theology (Moore 1991:72).

- 7) Seek unity and always search for the whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. The movement to organise communal life around the liturgical year<sup>81</sup> is a *gestalt* form of organising<sup>82</sup>. Another way to seek unity is to ask the same question to different texts.
- 8) Stay open to new ideas and forms of unity. "A teacher needs to realize that there is not one single pattern of unity to be taught" (Moore 1991:85).

#### Disadvantages of the Gestalt method

- Insight is more likely when the subjects are more intelligent or more developed, more experienced in the area of study and where there is room for trial and error (Moore 1991:66-67).
- Gestalt psychologists give primary attention to the present field of experience, and past experience gets far less attention. "Usually the past is a focal point primarily in relation to how it screens or influences new experiences" (Moore 1991:70).
- "Environmental exploration can be so focused on what is sensed in the immediate environment that the elements of knowledge outside of ordinary sense data get very little attention" (Moore 1991:80). In an apartheid society we can very easily miss large social and economic movements not immediately accessible to the senses.

John Westerhoff have proposed a gestalt form of organising Christian education. He suggests that churches organise all the church's community life and administrative committees around the seasons of the Christian year. "Such organization would coordinate the many aspects of community under a similar theme, thereby aiding its members in forming a gestalt, or unity, around the different events in the life of Jesus and the early Christian community" (Moore 1991:82). The danger of this approach is the elimination of other aspects of the Christian tradition.

- We need to expand this method with multiple forms of reflection, such as imagination, critical reflection, and the rest.

"Introducing many different facts and ideas can be dangerous if teachers want to teach students to believe only in a certain way. Seeking after unity is dangerous if teachers do not want to risk new visions of the world that threaten conventional ways of thinking and

---

<sup>81</sup> See also Hickman's (et al. 1992:26-33) discussions of the recovery of the Christian year and how it can function as a unifying principle in congregations.

<sup>82</sup> Westerhoff (1994:65), says that the Word and Sacraments of the Christian story can also be unifying principles and content for the Community's celebration.

acting. Preserving the complexity of detail is also dangerous if teachers want to perpetuate a dominant way of thinking and to discourage ideas and actions that emerge on the fringes of community. The word heresy derives from a root meaning ...'to choose for oneself'. If a community wants to discourage choice, it will advocate dominant beliefs, values, and practices and dismiss the complexity of detail that does not fit dominant patterns" (Moore 1991:79).

As remarked in Chapter 1, David Kelsey, in his book, *To understand God Truly* (1992:31,33) points out (in line with our debate) that there have been four dominant answers to the question: What is it to understand God? These variations on the picture of what it is to understand God deeply shape faith formation:

a) We come to a better understanding of God through *contemplation*. Faith formation focuses on disciplines of spirituality to order life so that contemplation is possible. "This notion of what it is to understand God has been definitive in Eastern Orthodoxy and enormously influential in Western European theological schooling. Under various terminological guises it continues to shape deeply many North American theological schools historically rooted in Roman Catholic and certain Anglican movements" (Kelsey 1992: 39).

b) We come to a better understanding of God through *discursive reasoning*. Here faith formation focuses on cultivating capacities for reasoning, for formulating and testing the propositions by which those truths are expressed. This notion continues to shape theological schools historically rooted in neo-Thomistic theology and Reformed schools rooted in British and Dutch scholastic Calvinism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Kelsey 1992:41,42).

c) We come to a better understanding of God through *the affections*. Faith formation focuses on the possibility of new, fulfilled or blessed life that one may appropriate for oneself by way of affections. "Where this picture predominates, theological schooling is organized around the goal of preparing leadership for Christian communities that is knowledgeable about the conditions under which such experiences occur, may be nurtured, and will flourish" (Kelsey 1992:44)<sup>83</sup>. This is widespread in protestant circles

---

<sup>83</sup> Kelsey (1992:44) remarks that when such schools are located in a "... cultural context marked by the triumph of the therapeutic, there is a strong tendency to construe those conditions in psychological and sociological categories and to equate the requisite knowledgeability with counseling skills and related psychoanalytical and social-psychological theory."

that have roots in religious communities shaped by one or another of these movements of revival.

d) We come to a better understanding of God through *the actions that compromise a Christian life*. Here faith formation focuses in highly moral seriousness above all, on the nurture and demands of the radically changing arrangements of economic and social power that have made the oppression systemic in our society, and on analysis of the society in which it should be lived. Liberation theologies are currently the most influential version of this notion (Kelsey 1992:49).

This study concludes that: Christian religious education will form people that are religious in a Christian way if it facilitates the following five movements:

from	<i>schooling</i>	to	active <i>remembrance</i> of tradition
from	<i>alienation</i> (ignoring people's stories)	to	<i>engagement</i> (Agent-subjects-in-relationship)
from	<i>rugged individualism</i>	to	<i>formation</i> in a relating community
from	<i>ignorance</i> (privatised faith)	to	<i>transformation</i> for social reconstruction
from	<i>rational formality</i>	to	<i>mystery</i> and art

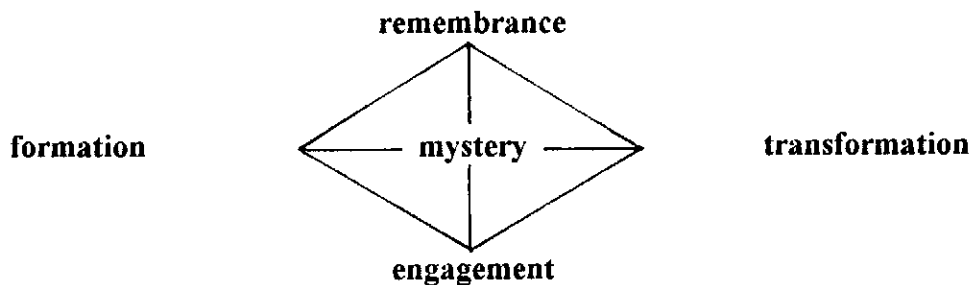
### **5.3 Multidimensional faith formation: Keeping many tensions together**

Not only must Christian religious education facilitate the above five movements, but it must also keep together the *tensions* that exist between them. The writer believes educators are to engage, weave together, and hold many formative processes in a symbiotic unity to promote wisdom in faith formation. Faith formation should hold the balance between the various formative processes in order to ensure a multidimensional learning outcome.

With the word "*tensions*" I am not emphasising mental, emotional or nervous strain, but rather a positive condition of stretching that is created when important forces pull against each other. Harris (1989:27) remarks: "Tension seen this way suggests an artistic idea and marks the presence of intelligence. Without the internal resistance that tension calls forth, we rush too quickly to completed activity, bypassing the chastening work of examined development and complex fulfillment. The lack of tension causes collapse. Tension is needed. Tension is good."

An emerging approach to faith formation will have to find a way across many of the tensions in Christian education. The most fundamental separation, the dialectic between traditioning and reinterpretation, have already been discussed. Faith formation also has a

dynamic interaction between five formative processes: revelation, commitment, sharing, political involvement and liturgical actions. There is a dialectical tension between these processes that must be upheld. If one of these should be neglected consistently over time, there will not be any faith formation, and faith formation would be one-sided.



But there are still more tensions in the field of faith formation:

*The tensions between community and social reconstruction:* The relationship between the church and the public is crucial. "Modern individualism has so captured the Western world that it erodes the reality of the church as the Body of Christ. The liberal senses maturity as the goal of education; the conservative, salvation. Yet both have lost the corporate sense of being the Body of Christ. Congregational life has suffered the onslaught of twentieth-century life, with many scars. The larger sense that Christians are bound together in Christ is very fragile" (Seymour and Miller 1993: 251). Education has focused on propping up congregational life for so long, that it has difficulty addressing the issues of the wider community. A faith formation approach should seek a doctrine of the individual within the community or society at large, thus addressing social issues.

*The tensions between salvation and liberation:* Faith formation should also address the struggle between salvation and liberation. "Salvation has come to mean transformation of the individual by the power of God's grace, and certainly all individuals need God's transforming power. Liberation has come to mean the overcoming of social injustices, and certainly the cries of the oppressed fill the earth. We need an attention to transformed lives that is, at the same time, an attention to transformed communities" (Seymour and Miller 1993: 252).

*The tensions between faith and maturity:* Another contrast that has arisen in recent years is the tension between faith and maturity. Faith cannot be reduced to a set of stages through which everyone moves, even though those stages of human development are constantly in the purview of the educator. "The imaginal content and commitment of faith

is of equal importance with, or even more important than its formal stage characteristics" (Seymour and Miller 1993: 252).

*The tensions between reflection and practice:* Furthermore the paradox between reflection and practice must be kept. Even though twentieth-century Christian education has sought to allow learning to be experiential, there is a continuing hiatus between learning doctrine and putting it into practice. Churches, as Latin American churches reminds us, will have to address larger social and ethical issues more directly in order to bring about a more viable human community.

This theory of faith-formation can keep together at least three more tensions, that Maria Harris (1989:27-35) names.

*The tension between the personal and communal:* Harris (1989:28), makes the point that elements in the Reformation - for example, holding to the ideal of the individual before God - unwittingly contributed to a notion of individualism rather than personalism. "In contrast to individualism, personalism emphasizes the understanding that all (not just each) human beings have equal dignity and that all (not just each) human being have the right to the abundant gift of the Creator. This set of beliefs draw special attention, just as the gospel does, to the marginal of the world, the great so-called underclass of the poor, the disenfranchised, and the ill. It draws particular attention to the poorest of the poor in every society, namely, women; to the unequal distribution of the world's goods; and to the disproportionate burdens placed on the backs of people of color."

But personalism also discovered that to be a person means to be "with", that we are only fully persons when we are in community and in communion with one another. "We are related to one another not only by baptism but by blood. We are responsible to one another for life and for death" (Harris 1989:29). It is critical to maintain this tension between celebrating each person and emphasising the person-in-relationship aspect of the gospel.

*The tensions between the local and the global:* There is a tension between the church understood and experienced as local, and the church understood and experienced as universal, worldwide, global. An approach for faith formation should not choose between an autonomous, local congregation, ultimately answerable only to itself before God, and a universal organism, with each local unit a cell necessarily related to all the other cells worldwide.

Harris (1989:31) remarks: "Neither vision can be allowed to dominate, for if one should, we would be in danger of isolation and self-centeredness and self-preoccupation, on the one hand, or of narrow, uniformed authoritarianism from a distance on the other. This

means we may champion the idea of small house churches ... alert to their own contexts and circumstances but only in the context of an understanding that each local community will forge its identity in terms of this global relations within the entire church."

*The tensions between clergy and the laity:* There is a growing realisation that the division clergy-laity is becoming increasingly inappropriate in the church. "The ordained and the nonordained are not related as haves and have-nots, as sacred and secular, as illuminatei (enlightened ones) and ignorant. Instead, our different roles are complimentary to one another and often overlapping." In every congregation there is usually at least one person whose ministry it is to remind the people of the Source of their lives. But in every ecclesial community there are many whose setting for ministry is the workplace, the home, the office, the hospital, the farm, the factory, or the publishing company.

The dialogue between traditioning and reinterpretation calls for a new understanding of faith formation. Such education will be more oriented towards forming people who are religious in a Christian way if it is more concerned about active remembrance of tradition, more focused on engaging people as Agent-subjects-in-relationship, more concerned about the Body of Christ as a formative/relating community, more attuned to transformative social reconstruction, and more open to the mystery of God.

#### **5.4 Conclusions**

This study proposed an inclusive educational theory for the formation and transformation of faith. The theory proposed could function as a basis for Christian educators to choose between various educational methods in their efforts to form and transform people's lives. It confronts the ultimate problem that the study seeks to adress: *education in the church does not form people who are religious in a Christian way.*

The study gave an overview of the existing literature on the different accents in Christian religious education. It discussed the different schools in the debate on the forming of values and gave a broad overview of the literature on Christian religious education. This could help the church in South Africa, which is faced with the task of forming values and shaping people to live in a Christian way. It is a quest for method to change education in the church to form people who are religious in a Christian way.

The study formed a unifying theory that shows the relationship or interaction between various religious educational methods, and suggested methods that may be used to further each of these emphases.

In Chapter 1 the state of affairs of faith formation was explored. A number of aspects of the crisis in faith formation in the church and society were presented.

Starting from the different historical positions in the epistemological debate in Chapter 2 an answer was sought to the question: How do we come to reliable knowledge? Groome ascribes an important function to rationalism and experiential knowledge in the formation of faith. Three important guidelines about faith formation crystallise in this chapter:

- a) The importance of active remembrance of tradition.
- b) The importance of engaging people as Agent-subjects-in-relationship.
- c) The importance of mystery, art and poetry.

Newbigin, Kelsey and McGrath helped us to understand that the epistemological focus point shifted and this shift allowed the epistemological dualism to be succumbed. Humankind interpret hermeneutically and Christianity believes that faith formation originates with God who reveals himself in and through his Word. *Theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis* are three ways by which faith formation takes place in the process to understand God truly.

The second question that was of historical importance in the debate on faith formation was: What is the formative influence of our social context? In Chapter 3 we reviewed the historical debate on the context of faith formation. Here three more guidelines for faith formation were formulated:

- a) The importance of formation in a relating community
- b) The importance of transformation for social reconstruction
- c) The importance of immersion through mystery, art and poetry

In Chapter 4 the outcome of the historic debate on faith formation was compared with the thoughts of Martin Luther and John Calvin on the teaching ministry of the church. The outcome of this comparison confirms that faith is formed in the tension field between traditioning and reinterpretation. The study understands the phrase faith formation as:

the processes and means (methods) whereby  
Christians (that is, not just children) as individuals and groups  
form each other over their life-span  
in the nurturing and formation of a Christian worldview, character and identity (that is, *traditioning*), and  
the development of critical, evaluative and analytical skills to *reinterpret* the Christian culture and self-understanding into which they have been traditioned.

The outcome of this comparison was a constructive proposal in Chapter 5 which stresses the importance of the interdependence of the formative processes and calls for the facilitation of five faith formation processes, namely:



- 1) from schooling to active remembrance of tradition;
- 2) from alienation to engagement;
- 3) from rugged individualism to formation in a relating community;
- 4) from ignorance to transformation for social reconstruction; and
- 5) from rational formality to mystery and art.

This proposal is an expansion of the guidelines formulated in Chapters 2 and 3. At the end of each of these processes a recommendation is made about various educational methods.

This study gives (i) a broad literature study that provides an overview of the field of Christian religious education, and (ii) generates a more inclusive theory that may serve as a basis for the decision that needs to be made on methodology in the formation of faith.

The following intuitions need more study:

- 1) From schooling to active remembrance of tradition: Modern individualism weakens the authority of the church and frequently lures churches into thinking of their ministries primarily in terms of “meeting needs”. This makes the self the arbiter of life’s meaning and purpose. An active remembrance of tradition can again make The Story the centre of meaning in Christians lives.
- 2) From rugged individualism to formation in a relating community: It will become increasingly important to understand that faith formation is part of the church's responsibility; and Christians must be willing to recognise and exercise this responsibility wherever and whenever they can. It is not only the duty of a few individuals in the church.
- 3) A distinction between theology and teaching disempowers people: Church leaders often sought ways to give shape to the faith so that it could be taught (traditioning). Teaching was defined as a way to translate the dogmatic content of faith. Faith formation must be understood to be a theological discipline that struggles to understand how faith is to be reinterpreted so that it can be lived. Christian education will have to find a way across this fundamental separation that has developed between theology and education.
- 4) Faith formation without competition and rivalry: Faith formation will not take place in a schooling system that encourages ongoing competition. In such a system knowledge is no longer a gift that should be shared, but a property that should be defended. Fear makes many students oversensitive to the reaction of their friends and teachers. It makes them extremely self-conscious and highly defensive.
- 5) From rational formality to mystery and art: We need a greater sense of transparency in faith formation. The art, rituals and symbols in the congregation must be more than *What*

*you see is what you get.* It could be worthwhile to investigate the use icons, art, stories, different musical instruments or stained-glass windows.

6) From alienation to engagement: Our faith formation approach should actively engage people's whole 'being', enabling them to reclaim their past, embrace their present, and take responsibility for the future. We are to create events that are 'humanising' for people, that teach them that they are constantly challenged to become agent-subjects who grow in God's likeness. This requires an environment, process, and content that are free of manipulation, domination, and indoctrination, which do not treat people as ahistorical, dependent-objects-in-isolation, and which do not ignore their stories.

7) From ignorance to transformation for social reconstruction: Maybe it is time to ask how our current efforts to educate is simply perpetuating individualism and conserving the status quo. It is time to look at methods that can reform our social reality, particularly oppressive social structures and and seek practices that would lead to freedom and change.

## **Postscript: Ministers and the rethinking of faith formation**

Paul D. Hanson makes the following conclusion at the end of his book *The People Called - The Growth of Community in the Bible* (1987:467): "The community of faith in the Bible is the people called. It is the people called forth from diverse sorts of bondage to freedom, called to a sense of identity found on a common bond with the God of righteousness and compassion, and called to the twin vocation of worship and participation in the creative, redemptive purpose that unifies all history and is directed to the restoration of the whole creation within a universal order of shalom." I have made the point earlier that what we want to teach people must be the same as how we teach them. If we want to form a community as Hanson proposes, then what we want to form must be our guide to how we are forming it. And how we are shaping people will influence what we are teaching them.

Looking at Hanson's conclusion, we see that Christian faith lived in a community has five dimensions. The first is an affective dimension. We are a "people". We are firstly called to be a "life-sustaining fellowship" (Hanson 1987:501). Secondly, lived Christian faith has a cognitive dimension. We must know that our identity is founded in God. Thirdly, faith has an obediential dimension. We are called forth from bondage to freedom. Fourthly, there is a trusting dimension. We usually describe it with the word worship. Lastly there is a behavioural dimension. As a community we participate in the creative, redemptive purpose, working towards a universal shalom.

Mainline Protestantism is at the crossroads. The challenge is to live as a called people. Our current situation presents itself with the opportunity in which we can rediscover our heritage and to begin defining ourselves less in terms of our surrounding culture and more in terms of what it means to be the church of Jesus Christ in the contemporary world.

It is unlikely that this will happen without the emergence of a much stronger teaching office. Leaders on every level of church life will have to learn how to *tradition* and *reinterpret* the normative beliefs and practices of our tradition. This should take place in the seminaries, denomination's educational agencies and congregations.

Let us conclude with Osmer (1991:253) who says: "It is perhaps foolish to single out any group of leaders as especially important to the recovery of a strong teaching office in mainline Protestantism. Honesty, however, forces me to conclude by doing so. The ordained ministers of the church are in the best position to facilitate the emergence of a revitalized teaching office in the contemporary church. ...the ministers of the church are in the best position to lead congregations to an understanding of themselves as centers of teaching and practical theological reflection and not just places where personal needs are met and crises surmounted."

Ministers and congregations cannot wait for changes in other centres of the teaching office, however important they are. They must begin to rethink their own attempts for the formation of faith. Teaching ministers will give birth to teaching congregations. Teaching congregations will form people who are religious in a Christian way. Mainline Protestant churches are waiting for such ministers and such congregations to emerge.

This study's definition of faith formation includes a number of themes from the approaches of many decades and reinterprets them according to contemporary discussion and praxis. The role of the Christian educator can be of enormous significance in the coming decades, if the truths of the tradition are elaborated and reinterpreted by the people of God as they address the issues of our time within God's grace-filled creation.

## 6. Bibliography

- Anker, R M (ed) 1991. *Dancing in the dark - Youth, Popular Culture, and the Electronic Media*. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Astley, J 1994. *The Philosophy of Christian Religious Education*. Religious Education Press: Birmingham, Alabama.
- Babin, P 1991. *The New Era in Religious Communication*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis.
- 1964. *Crisis of Faith - The Religious Psychology of Adolescence*. Gill and Son: Dublin.
- Bausch, W J 1989. *Storytelling - Imagination and Faith*. Twenty-Third Publications: Mystic, Connecticut.
- 1991. *Telling Stories Compelling*. Twenty-Third Publications: Mystic, Connecticut.
- Banks, R 1988. *Paul's idea of community: The Early House Churches in their Historical Setting*. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Bellah, R N et al 1985. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. University of California Press: Berkeley.
- Benson, P L and Eklin, C H 1990. *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations*. Search Institute: Minneapolis.
- Bonhoeffer, D 1945. *Life Together*. Harper: San Francisco.
- Boshoff, H 1995. *Die Kerk in die Nuwe Suid-Afrika*. Potchefstroom.
- Browning, D S 1991. *A Fundamental Practical Theology - Descriptive and Strategic proposals*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis.
- Brueggemann, W 1989. *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation*. Fortress: Minneapolis.
- 1988. *Israel's praise*. Fortress: Philadelphia.
- Burger, C W 1991. *Praktiese teologie in Suid Afrika*. RGN-uitgewery: Pretoria.

- Bushnell, H 1967. *Christian Nurture*. Yale University Press: New Haven.
- Capps, D 1990. *Reframing*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis.
- Carr, J and Carr, A 1987. *The Pilgrimage Project*. The Upper Room: Nashville, Tennessee.
- Carr, J and Carr, A 1985. *Experiment in Practical Christianity*. The Upper Room: Nashville, Tennessee.
- Carstens, C J 1995. *Die ervaringsleersiklus as opleidingsmodel*. Unpublished: M.Th thesis. University of Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch.
- Craddock, F B 1979. *As one without authority*. Abingdon: Nashville.
- Cully, I V 1960. *Children in the Church*. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia.
- Cully, K B 1967. *The Search for a Christian Education - Since 1940*. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia.
- Dawn, M J 1995. *Reaching out without dumbing down - A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture*. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Dewey J 1938. *Logic - The theory of inquiry*. Henry Holt and Company: New York.
- Dingemans, G D J 1986. *In de leerschool van het geloof*. J.H. Kok: Kampen.
- Foster, C R 1994. *Educating Congregations*. Abingdon Press: Nashville.
- Fowler, J W 1981. *Stages of Faith. The Psychology of Human Development and Quest for Meaning*. Harper & Row: New York.
- 1987. *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia.
- 1991. *Weaving the New Creation - Stages of Faith and the Public Church*. Harper & Row: New York.
- Freire, P 1978. *Pedagogy in Process*. The Seabury Press: New York.
- Furman, B and Ahola, T 1992. *Solution Talk*. W.W. Norton: New York.

- Griggs, D L and Griggs, P 1976. *Generations Learning Together*. Abingdon: Nashville.
- Griggs, D L 1985. *Basic Skills for Church Teachers*. Abingdon: Nashville.
- 1974. *Teaching Teachers to Teach - A Basic Manual for Church Teachers*. Abingdon: Nashville.
- Groome, T H 1980. *Christian Religious Education*. Harper: San Francisco.
- T H 1991. *Sharing Faith - A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry*. Harper: San Francisco.
- Hanson, P D 1986. *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible*. Harper & Row Publishers: San Francisco.
- Harris, C 1992. *Creating relevant rituals*. E.J. Dwyer: Newtown, Australia.
- Harris, M 1989. *Fashion me a people - Curriculum in the Church*. Westminster/John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky.
- Hendriks, H J 1995. Facing the facts in Buchanan, D and Hendriks, H J (eds), *Meeting the Future*, 17-32. Randburg: Knowledge Resources.
- Hendriks, H J 1995. *South African Denominational Growth and Decline 1911-1991*. Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 91, 35-57.
- Hickman, H L et al 1992. *The New Handbook of the Christian Year*. Abingdon Press: Nashville.
- Hoge, D R, Johnson, B and Luidens, D A 1994. *Vanishing Boundaries - The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers*. Westminster/John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky.
- Hopewell, J F 1987. *Congregations: Stories and Structures*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia.
- Ingalls, J D 1973. *A Trainers guide to Andragogy*. Waltham: Massachusetts.
- Icenogle, G W 1994. *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry: An Integrative Approach*. InterVarsity Press: Illinois.

- Johnson, S 1989. *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom*. Abingdon Press: Nashville.
- Jongsma-Tieleman, P E 1991. *Geloven; gewoonte of keuze*. J.H. Kok: Kampen.
- Joyce, B and Weil, M 1980. *Models of teaching*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs: New Jersey.
- Kleissler, T A , LeBert, M A and McGuiness M C (eds) 1991. *Small Christian Communities: A Vision of Hope*. Paulist Press: New York.
- Knowles, M S 1985. *Andragogy in Action*. Jossey-Bass Publishers: London.
- M S 1971. *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*. Association Press: New York.
- Knouwds, F P J 1989. *Die ontwerp en benutting van 'n mensbeskouing in die formulering van 'n prakties-teologiese basisteorie vir die opvoeding van die volwassene in die kerk*. Unpublished doctoral thesis: University of South Africa.
- Knowles, M 1973. *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*. Gulf Publishing Company: Houston.
- Kelsey, D H 1992. *To understand God truly - What's Theological about a Theological school*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Larsen, D L 1995. *Telling the old, old Story - the Art of Narrative Preaching*. Crossway books, Wheaton, Illinois.
- Little, L L 1962. *Wider Horizons in Christian Adult Education*. University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh.
- Lines, T A 1987. *Systemic Religious Education*. Religious Education Press: Alabama.
- Marais, F 1995. Struggling for a new identity in Buchanan, D and Hendriks, H J (eds), *Meeting the Future, 141-148*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources.
- Markquart, E F 1985. *Quest for better preaching*. Augsburg: Minneapolis.
- Megill, E L 1976. *Education in the African Church*. Geoffrey Chapman: London.



- McGrath, A E 1996. *A Passion for Truth - The intellectual coherence of evangelicalism*. Apollos: Leicester.
- Moore, M E M 1989. *Teaching from the heart - Theology and educational method*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Mitchell, H H 1990. *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*. Abingdon Press: Nashville.
- Müller, J C 1996. *Om tot verhaal te kom: pastorale gesinsterapie*. RGN-uitgewery: Pretoria.
- Nelson, C E 1988. *Congregations: Their Power to Form and Transform*. John Knox Press: Atlanta.
- Nelson, G M 1986. *To Dance with God - Family ritual and community celebration*. Paulist Press: New York.
- Nelson, 1992. *Helping Teenagers Grow Morally*. Westminster/ John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky.
- Newbigin, L 1995. *Proper Confidence - Faith, Doubt, and Certainty in Christian Discipleship*. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- 1966. *Honest Religion for Secular Man*. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia.
- 1989. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Nouwen, H J M 1971. *Creative Ministry*. Image books: New York.
- Osmer, R R 1990. *A Teachable Spirit - Recovering the Teaching Office in the Church*. Westminster / John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky.
- 1992. *Teaching for Faith*. Westminster / John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky.
- 1993a. Three "Futuribles" for the Mainline Churches in Schuller, D S (ed), *Rethinking Christian Education*. Chalice Press: St. Louis, Missouri.

- 1993b. *Teaching as Practical Theology* in Seymour, J L and D E Miller (ed). *Theological Approaches to Christian Education*. Abingdon Press: Nashville.
- Palmer, P J 1993. *To know as we are known - Education as a Spiritual Journey*. Harper: San Francisco.
- Pointer, R 1985. *Good things come in small groups*. Scripture Union: London.
- Purdy, J C (ed) 1985. *Always Being Reformed - The future of Church Education*. The Geneva Press: Philadelphia.
- Rambo, L R 1993. *Understanding Religious Conversion*. Yale University Press: New Haven.
- Ritchie, K 1995. *Marketing to Generation X*. Lexington Books: New York.
- Richards, L O 1981. *A Theology of personal ministry*. Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids.
- Roozen, D A, Evans, A F and Evans, R A 1996. *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach*. Center for Social and Religious Research: Hartford, Connecticut.
- Saliers, D E 1994. *Worship as Theology*. Abingdon Press: Nashville.
- Sampson, P, Samuel, V and Sugden, C (eds) 1994. *Faith and Modernity*. Regnum Books International: Oxford.
- Schuller, D S (ed) 1993. *Rethinking Christian Education*. Chalice Press: St. Louis, Missouri.
- Seymour, J L and D E Miller (ed) 1993. *Theological Approaches to Christian Education*. Abingdon Press: Nashville.
- Sherrill, L J 1944. *The Rise of Christian Education*. The MacMillan Company: New York.
- 1963. *The Gift of Power*. The MacMillan Company: New York.
- Sider, R J 1994. *Cup of Water, Bread of Life*. Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids.

- Taylor, M J (ed) 1960. *Religious Education*. Abingdon Press: New York.
- Wells, D F 1994. *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams*. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids.
- Warren, M 1989. *Faith, Culture and the Worshipping Community*. Paulist Press: New York.
- Westerhoff, J H 1976. *Will our Children have faith?* Harper: San Francisco.
- 1994. *Spiritual Life: The Foundation for Preaching and Teaching*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky.
- White, J W 1988. *Intergenerational Religious Education - Models, Theory, and Prescription for interage life and learning in the faith community*. Religious Education Press: Birmingham, Alabama.
- Wyckoff, D C 1955. *The Task of Christian Education*. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia.
- 1961. *Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum*. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia.
- Wyckoff, D C and Don Richter (ed) 1982. *Religious Education Ministry with Youth*. Religious Education Press: Birmingham, Alabama.
- Wilson, H S, et al 1996. *Pastoral Theology from a Global Perspective - A Case Study Approach*. Orbit Books: New York.
- Wuthnow, R 1994. *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community*. The Free Press: New York.